Graduate School of Education
University of Exeter

Investigating the Process of EAP Course Design by Teachers at a Tertiary Level, English Department, a Private College in Oman from the Perspectives of Teachers and Students

Submitted by IMAN JABBAR ABBAS AL KHALIDI

to the University of Exeter in part fulfillment for the degree of Doctorate of Education (EdD) in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in May, 2016

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature…………………………………………………………………. 
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Iman Jabbar Al Khalidi
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the loving memory of my

Father and Mother

For their love, support, and encouragement
ABSTRACT

This study is addressing course design as an important process within the area of language curriculum development. The importance of course design lies in its being as the preparatory stage that contributes to shaping and guiding the subsequent stages of the whole process of course development-implementation and evaluation. The study aims at understanding the role of teachers at a tertiary context in Oman in designing the courses they teach based on their perspectives. It also aims at understanding how students conceptualize and evaluate these courses. In addition, it aims at exploring what issues and factors have the greatest impact on course design and in what way from the teachers and students' perspectives as course developers and course receivers, respectively.

Based on its purpose, the study is conceived within the paradigm of interpretivism employing its epistemology and philosophy as an underpinning stance. On the basis of the participants' perspectives and experiences, the qualitative approach has been chosen for determining the strategy and methods of sampling, and data collection and data analysis. In order to gain thick descriptions and information about the investigated phenomenon, the researcher used the method of semi-structured interviews with the teacher sample and focus group discussion with the student sample. In addition, the method of document analysis was also used as a supplementary tool for the teacher sample as it is concerned with the mechanism of course design.

Findings of the study were categorized according to the five research questions of the study and the two types of data (teachers and students' data). Interpretations of teachers' data revealed that they conceptualize course design as a matter of prioritizing the key element- that is mainly students' needs- that contributes to shaping and guiding the other components of a course. The students' data, on the other hand, revealed a variety of perspectives involving their evaluation of single aspects of course design, particularly materials development and selection of the content of a course, with their major concern about course implementation. Among the
major findings of this study is the identification of challenges confronted by teachers and students that were described in terms of problems impacting negatively the process of designing courses by teachers and the process of learning by students.

Based on the findings of data analysis, the study offers a number of implications and suggestions that are of value for teachers who are involved in the process of course design and the institution where the study takes place. Teachers must have an active role in course design due to their direct contact with the learning situation. Teachers’ involvement in course design is considered as a major factor behind the stage of course implementation. For this, teachers need to be aware of the relationship between course design and its implementation and how they affect each other. Doubtlessly, teachers can play an active role in course design, yet the institution must provide external support such as professional development programs and establishing a professional curriculum committee in order to ensure the effectiveness of curriculum development.
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<tr>
<td>GCC</td>
<td>Gulf Cooperation Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>Grade Point Average</td>
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<td>GSC</td>
<td>Graduate Students Council</td>
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<td>EAP</td>
<td>English for academic purposes</td>
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<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
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<td>ICD</td>
<td>Integrated Course design</td>
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<tr>
<td>KASA</td>
<td>Knowledge, Awareness, Skills, Attitude</td>
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<td>NELP</td>
<td>National English Language Policy</td>
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<td>OAC</td>
<td>Oman Accreditation Council</td>
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<td>Q. A.</td>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
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<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages</td>
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In any English language teaching program (ELT), curriculum development is the central process that is composed of a set of processes of which course design is the most essential one. This is due to its status as an initial stage in developing a course that begins with gathering information about the course and learning situation and ends up with planning and structuring a course to be ready for teaching and evaluation (Graves, 2000; 1996; Richards, 2007; Lovell-Troy and Eickmann, 1992).

Within the literature on language curriculum, there is some confusion or overlap between four relevant but not identical terms: ‘curriculum development’, ‘course development’, ‘course design’, and ‘syllabus design’. The overlap exists because of the crucial relationship between them leading to different interpretations by some users. Initially and for the purpose of this study, it is helpful to draw the distinction between these terms indicating how they will be used in order to avoid any confusion for the readers. Below is a brief description of each of these terms.

- **Curriculum development** is a very general term that works on the level of a whole program and the level of a course of study. At the level of program, the term curriculum development refers to the “consideration of the whole complex of philosophical, social and administrative factors which contribute to the planning of an educational program” (Allen, 1984:61). At the level of a course, curriculum refers to “the processes and products of planning, teaching and evaluating a course of study or related courses” (Graves, 2008:147).
- **Course development** is also viewed in a broad sense as it involves four stages “planning the course”, “teaching the course”, “ongoing assessment” and “decision making and reteaching it” as in Figure 1.1 below (Graves, 1996: 4). In this sense it is similar to the term curriculum, but it doesn’t work on the level of the program as a whole. Rather, it works on the level of a particular course of study. Accordingly, it is essential to draw a distinction between curriculum and course development, particularly in relation to the role of a teacher with these processes. In this respect, Graves (1996:3) points out to the distinction stating that:

  The distinction between a curriculum and a course is nevertheless important because some of the areas of concern in curriculum development may be out of hands of teachers who are developing courses-for example, societal needs analysis, testing for placement purposes, or program wide evaluation.

- **Course design** is viewed at the specific level as "a teaching/learning experience that occurs over a specific time with a specific focus"(Graves, 2008: 147). According to Figure 1.1 below, course design which is the main concern of this study represents phase one of course development-planning the course. In this sense, it forms one part of the process of course development which is in turn one part of the process of curriculum development upon which the whole program is built (for further discussion see Chapter Three).

- **Syllabus design** must also be understood at the narrow level as it is only concerned with the specification and grading of the content or units of a particular course (Graves, 1996; Nunan, 1988). As such, it is considered as a sub-component of the planning phase of curriculum development. In this study, it is going to be used as a component of course design and will be referred to in terms of conceptualizing content (see section 3.4.4).
In light of the discussion above, course design which is the primary concern of the study constitutes the foundation of the process of course development that contributes to shaping and guiding the subsequent stages of teaching and evaluation of a course. In her emphasis on the importance of course design, Toohey (2002:1) points out that “Much of the creativity and power in teaching lies in the design of curriculum”. This is because curriculum development involves “the choice of texts and ideas” that later will serve in planning and defining the learning experiences for students.

Furthermore, course design plays a crucial role in shaping classroom methodology. Graves (2000: x) points to this contribution stating that “Course design and teaching go hand-in-hand as the teacher builds and acts on knowledge in and from classroom practice”. This implies that courses must be designed in accordance with the reality of classroom setting in the sense that the reality of classroom involving the socio-cultural factors and students’ ability in learning influences the design process. However, Toohey (2002:1) argues for the priority of course design in the process of teaching and
learning when she states that “Of course the way in which the curriculum is brought to life is equally important, but the power of good teacher-student interactions is multiplied many times by good course design” (ibid). From both arguments, we understand that course design and teaching are two interrelated processes in the sense that one influences the other.

Importantly, course designers, administrators, and teachers need be aware of a crucial issue that is how to design powerful and effective courses. A well designed course is like a guiding map for teachers (Fink, 2003). Furthermore, designing effective courses helps teachers “avoid wasting their time chasing educational fads or discovering on their own, through trial and error, effective educational principles and practices” (Whetten, 2007: 355). A powerful course design provides teachers with a sense of satisfaction regarding any methods or a particular type of syllabus and activities they adopt.

1.2 The Scope of the Study

My perspective in this study is influenced by two integrated crucial issues: the first issue is the teacher involvement in course design and the second one is the power of course designs. The issue of teacher involvement in course design is based on Graves’s central point that “teachers are the best people to design the courses they teach” (2000, xi). In her book Designing Language Courses: A Guide for Teachers, Graves argues for the involvement of teachers into the process of course design. Her argument draws on the rationale that course design is a grounded process integrating the components or elements of a particular course with the process of teaching and learning and the evaluation of a course. In her argument, Graves points out that when designing courses, teachers need to make “reasoned choices” in order to convert their teaching experiences into “a coherent course plan” (2000: X). Likewise, Elliot (1994) points to the central role of teachers in the
process of curriculum development due to their teaching experiences and familiarity with students' needs.

The second crucial issue is concerned with the power of course design. Fink (2007:13) points out that the power of course design lies in preparing courses that “prepare students not only for future classes but also for future personal, social, and professional life experiences”. This entails from teachers to design courses that integrate with students’ needs and the learning goals. Additionally, at the level of course implementation, designing a powerful or effective course contributes to achieving students’ motivation and engagement in classroom participation. Accordingly, teachers need to be aware of how to design a powerful course in light of these goals.

In the context where the current study takes place teachers are given as Toohey states the advantage of designing the courses they teach as this reflects “their control over curriculum” (2002:1). In this respect, teachers’ role involves selecting materials and content for a particular course, developing specific objectives, and preparing formal written and oral exams for students’ assessment. The aim of teachers, no doubt, is to articulate courses that benefit students not only for classroom purposes but also for future purposes. The literature on course design has provided considerable work on identifying, conceptualizing, and analyzing course design through providing several models and approaches. This study, however, attempts to approach further understanding and exploration reflecting the participants’ perspectives and experiences based on reality and naturalism of their professional context. It is expected through this investigation to understand how teacher participants design their courses within the considerations and circumstances of their professional context.
1.3 English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Setting

This section sheds light on the type of English language courses that the process of course design in this study is concerned with and the type of the setting where the study is taking place. Both the distinction of the type of English and the setting completes the analytic picture of course design process that will be presented in detail in the literature review chapter of this thesis.

Overall, within the field of English language teaching (ELT), “the contexts are distinguished by both the places in which and the purposes for which the learners are studying a language” (Graves, 2008: 155). Generally, there are two major contexts of English language teaching, English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL). English as a foreign language context refers to the context whose first language is not English and where English is only learned inside the classroom. On the other hand, English as a second language context refers to the context where English is the official language and as such, it is widely used inside and outside the classroom (ibid).

Distinguishing the context where the English language is taught or trained is essential as it determines the type of curriculum development at all stages such as preparation, implementation, and evaluation that must be developed for a particular context. This is because “Language curriculums differ according to the relationship between language inside the classroom and language outside the classroom” (Graves, 2008: 155).

Within these contexts (EFL and ESL) there are other distinctions such as English for specific purposes (ESP), English as an international language (EIL), English for general purposes (EGP), etc. Each of these types draws upon a specific language curriculum and as such they are distinguished by having particular course content, goals and objectives. Accordingly, language teachers and course designers need to be aware of the selection of materials, syllabus design, goals and objectives development when designing or
preparing a particular course for a particular ELT situation. In other words, teachers need to be aware of adjusting the course components (materials, content, goals, and assessment) to the type of English course or situation.

The major type of these distinctions is the ESP that has developed as a result of the increasing advancement and developments in science and information technology that the world has recently witnessed. This has resulted in establishing training programs and academic institutions that are concerned with offering English for specific purposes (ESP) with the aim of fulfilling the learners' specific needs. Thus, the ESP is distinguished by its focus on learners' specific needs, interests, and attitudes in a specific teaching learning situation (Hutchinson and Waters, 1991). For this purpose, further types of English have been developed such as English for occupational purposes (EOP) and English for academic purposes (EAP). Our concern in this study is the EAP, and as such the discussion that follows provides an overall view of this type and the curriculum that it belongs to.

English for academic purposes is a branch of the broader field of ESP where English teaching is mainly concerned with study purposes and oriented towards professional preparation of students (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001; Jordan, 1997). English for academic purposes is usually administered for students at the tertiary level in the teaching of English as a foreign or second language in universities as well as other academic institutions (Jordan, 1997).

The development of EAP has come as a result of the awareness of experts in the ELT field that students at the tertiary level need specific language skills and content that can be hardly fulfilled by teaching English as a general language (EGL) (Shing and Sim, 2011; Sabariah and Galea, 2005). Accordingly, students' needs constitute a crucial component that contributes to shaping and designing EAP courses (Jordan, 1997; Dudley-Evans and St. John, 2004). Assessing or analyzing students’ needs involves identification of specific sets of skills, texts, linguistic forms, and communicative practices that a particular group of students need (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 2004).
The process of designing EAP courses is guided by an academic curriculum that is concerned with developing not only students’ English proficiency but also their academic needs in association with a particular studies and profession (Robinson, 1980; Jordan, 1997). Thus, in order to design successful EAP courses, teachers and course developers have to play a vital role in selecting materials, designing syllabus, and adjusting the course to students’ needs (Hutchinson and Waters, 1991; Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001).

Dudly-Evans and St. John (2004) raise an important issue regarding the relationship between EAP and EFL or ESL situations. They state that EAP is interpreted and implemented differently in accordance with the policy of the country and the type of the academic institution. Therefore, they categorize four types of situations where the EAP is needed on the basis that the type of the situation determines adjusting the EAP course to suit the students’ needs in a tertiary context. The types of situations are listed below:

1. An English speaking country such as UK and USA
2. An ESL situation where English is used as the official language of the country
3. A situation where the majority of subjects are taught in English and some are taught in the national language
4. “A situation where all subject courses are taught in the national language, but English may be important for ancillary reasons.” (Dudly Evans and St. Johns, 2004:34).

The context where the study is taking place is a tertiary institution that belongs to the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman (Chapter Two provides a detailed description of the context). In this context, the English department, the main concern in this study, offers a range of EAP courses to tertiary level students with prior EFL. The courses are guided by an academic curriculum with the aim of fulfilling students’ needs for future professions and study. Therefore, in light of the discussion above, the context is an EFL since it is a
non-native English speaking country where English is not the native language of the country. However, the courses are considered as EAP since they are designed for catering a particular group of students’ needs in that academic context. Their specific needs involve developing their language proficiency in association with their future career and study.

1.4 The concept of Teacher Perspective

Among the key terms in this study is the teacher perspective as this qualitative study relies on its participants’ perspectives. Generally, the term perspective refers to an interrelated set of thoughts and intentions through which a person makes sense of a particular problematic situation (Pratt and Associates, 1998). In teaching, the term perspective refers to what we “do as teachers and why we think such actions are worthy and justified” (ibid: 10). In their emphasis on the importance of teaching perspectives, they point out to the three aspects that a perspective involves stating that:

Each perspective on teaching is a complex web of actions, intentions and beliefs; each, in turn, creates its own criteria for judging or evaluating right and wrong, true and false, effective and ineffective. Perspectives determine our roles and idealized self-images as teachers as well as the basis for reflecting on practice.

Pratt and Associates further explain that a greater understanding of a teaching perspective requires understanding these three aspects: actions, intentions, and beliefs. This is because these aspects are considered as “indicators of commitment” of a perspective teacher (Pratt and Associates, 1998: 15). They form the back bone for a sense of commitment in teaching which in turn forms the basis of a teacher’s perspective regarding “what teaching means and how it should be carried out” (ibid:31). “Actions are the most concrete and accessible aspect of teaching perspectives through which we activate intentions and beliefs to help people learn” (Deggs et.al., 2008: 2). Intentions refer to teachers’ plan or agenda for teaching and learning.
Beliefs represent an abstract aspect of perspectives. They “represent underlying values which are held to varying degrees of meaning among people… Beliefs represent the most stable and least flexible aspect of a person’s perspective on teaching” (ibid).

This study takes place in a context within higher education where the faculty members to a large extent rely on their own perspectives when designing and implementing their courses as part of their role and responsibility of being a teacher. Teachers’ perspectives are a dominant factor as they influence how and what to choose for designing and teaching a specific course (Clark and Peterson, 1986). Philosophically speaking, this study draws upon the paradigm of interpretivism in which teachers’ perspectives are considered as an epistemological tool for gaining good information for the purpose of the study. Thus, pedagogically and philosophically teachers’ perspectives are reliable since they draw on their lived experiences, reflections, and familiarity with the context. This has motivated me as a researcher to benefit from my colleagues’ lived experiences regarding course design to conduct this study. For the purpose of the study, the term perspective is going to be used to refer to how teachers in this context see, think, and believe when designing their EAP courses.

1.5 Purpose and Questions of the study

The main purpose of the study is to contribute to knowledge about designing EFL/EAP courses by teachers at the tertiary education level. For this the study aims to understand how teachers in a particular tertiary education context in Oman design the courses they teach based on their beliefs and perspectives. It also aims to investigate and explore what issues and factors have the greatest impact on course design and how they affect the process. Furthermore, the study aims to understand from students, as course recipients, how they conceptualize and evaluate the courses designed by their teachers, and how those courses affect their English language learning.
The investigation of those issues and factors helps the researcher to approach a holistic understanding of the course design process in order to provide a set of implications for improving course design in this professional context. In light of the purpose and aims of the study and its concern with investigating the issue from the perspectives of teachers and students, the current study addresses the following questions:

Q.1 How do teachers at a tertiary institution in Oman design their EAP/EFL courses?
Q.2 What factors have a major impact on designing courses from the perspectives of teachers?
Q.3 How do students perceive the courses designed by their teachers?
Q.4 What challenges do students face in relation to course design?
Q.5 What are the suggestions by teachers and students for the improvement of course design?

1.6 Rationale of the Study

The notion of teacher role in course design constitutes an essential issue in curriculum development because of reasons mentioned earlier in this chapter. Nevertheless, going through research on curriculum, I have found out that little research has been conducted to address how teachers participate in shaping and constructing course design as a whole process. It is expected that investigating this phenomenon from the perspectives of teachers lead to answering the questions of this research study that haven’t been answered by other research studies and also the literature on curriculum development. Accordingly, the study is guided by the rationale that there is a need to conduct research studies to investigate this phenomenon, particularly from the perspectives of teachers and students who are directly concerned with it. This study intends to achieve this need.
At the time of collecting data, the researcher was working in an EFL/EAP context at a tertiary level in Oman where designing courses is of primary concern for teachers. Thus, it was a good opportunity for me as a researcher to make use of the surrounding conditions and circumstances of the investigated topic. In other words, my presence in the site where the studied phenomenon takes place was a good opportunity for me to benefit from teachers and students’ lived experiences as an epistemological means for conducting this research.

1.7 Significance of the study

The current study is important for several reasons. First, this study is addressing an essential issue within the area of curriculum development that is the role of teachers in course design. Investigating teachers’ role in course design is important since it helps us understand how teachers act in shaping and designing their courses. It also helps us understand the relationship between course design and its implementation from the perspectives of teachers, and how each stage can affect the other.

Second, the importance of this study lies in its purpose of reaching a holistic understanding of the investigated phenomenon. This understanding provides more insight into the area that is of value for teachers who are involved in the process.

Third, the study is a blend of theoretical and practical work. The theoretical work introduces certain key views and beliefs of second language course design proposed by highly professional scholars and educators in the field of curriculum development. This part of study will be a significant endeavor in identifying and illustrating some particular issues relating to designing EFL/EAP courses effectively. These issues involve components that establish a course, principles, and approaches that contribute to designing an effective coherent course. The significance of the identification of theoretical
views lies in providing a theoretical picture about the process of course design that is of value, particularly for teachers who are concerned with designing their courses. The practical part, on the other hand which constitutes the weight of this study, will also be of significant value in providing some identification, explorations, and reflections on specific issues relating to course design from the perspectives of a group of participants, teachers and students, who are involved in the process.

Fourth, based on the syntheses of theoretical and practical views the study provides an identification of a set of implications and recommendations for designing effective coherent and contextual courses. Hopefully, these implications and recommendations will be taken into consideration by the administration, teachers, students in the context of study and other similar contexts. Hopefully, the study will be beneficial to teachers and students as well in the context of TESOL at the college level. It is intended to provide teachers with deeper understanding of the process of course design and how it has been conceptualized and evaluated from theoretical as well as practical perspectives. If teachers understand its complexity, components, mechanism, principles and goals, they will be able to design or modify old courses in a way that goes in line with the contemporary approaches of curriculum development. For students, on the other hand, if they understand the scope of the course, learning objectives, activities, and how they will be assessed, they will likely be satisfied with the results and the course as a whole.

Fifth, as stated earlier there is relatively little research on investigating the process of course design at the tertiary level in Oman and the region of the Arabian Gulf. In addition, most studies that have been conducted in the field of TESOL curriculum focus on particular aspects or learning elements such as learners’ needs, materials development, or syllabus design. Only a few studies have researched course design in relation to teacher role at the higher education level. My study intends to address course design as a
whole process in terms of components, factors, and implications. Hopefully, this study will have the potential to fill in the gap and enrich the research and literature on curriculum design.

1.8 Contribution to Knowledge

The current case study contributes to knowledge regarding the field of TESOL curriculum by investigating the process of course design from the perspectives of teachers and students in a particular professional context. The study has shown the role of the participants’ beliefs in conceptualizing and analyzing the process of course design. The participants’ beliefs are important as they are formed as a consequence of their contextual and lived experience. Furthermore, the study supports the existing literature focusing on the impact of teachers’ beliefs and involvement in designing and implementing courses (Graves, 2000; Richards, 2007; Clark and Peterson, 1986; Farrell and Lim, 2005; Elliot, 1994).

The study also contributes to knowledge by focusing on the role of methodology in designing a course. As such, the study provides support for Graves’s (2000: x) argument that “Course design and teaching go hand-in-hand” on the basis that classroom provides knowledge and practical strategies for course design.

The investigation of course design from the perspectives of teachers and students’ perceptions calls for the need to take into consideration both theory and practice when designing EFL/EAP courses. The literature on curriculum development provides considerable work and models for designing and constructing course design. However, in reality the process is determined by certain issues and factors such as the culture of the context, policy of institution, and the students’ proficiency of English. The current study has achieved this purpose by providing a set of findings revealing particular crucial issues contributing in shaping and guiding course design.
The study also contributes to the quality assurance system at the level of the college and the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman that aims at enhancing the quality of teaching. The current study contributes to achieve this aim by providing a set of recommendations and implications for improving course design based on lived experiences of teachers and students.

Overall, in spite of its uniqueness and particularity, this case study research contributes to knowledge of curriculum development by several ways. Among them are the application of the research strategy, the methods of sampling and data collection and analysis, and the identification of the emergent themes and categories. It also contributes to the knowledge of curriculum development by supporting and arguing the literature on curriculum development.

1.9 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is composed of seven chapters, in addition to references and appendixes. The first chapter is introduction. It provides an overall background of the study, the scope of study, aims and research questions, the rational of study, the significance of study, contribution to knowledge, and outline of the thesis.

The second chapter is devoted to describing the context of study. The description involves providing some cultural, socio-economic, and political issues that are directly or indirectly related to the context where the topic takes place. The chapter then provides a description of the population of the study, represented by instructors, administrators, and students.

The third chapter is concerned with reviewing the literature and previous studies relevant to EFL/EAP course design. It introduces some definitions of course design, models, principles, and approaches underlining the process.

The fourth chapter is the beginning of the practical work. Firstly, it introduces the research questions with a list of aims concerned with each question.
Secondly, it provides the rationale of the selection of the qualitative approach for the study. Thirdly, it explains the selection of research design supported by some theoretical justifications. The fourth part describes the methods of data collection, data analysis, and procedures of sampling. This chapter is also devoted to explain the criteria of validity, credibility, and trustworthiness in relation to the methodology and methods of research. In addition, it involves three sections clarifying ethical dimensions, challenges, and limitations of study. The fifth chapter presents and describes the results of the study. It is organized into several sections according to the five research questions. Chapter six provides a detailed discussion of findings of study that emerged from the analysis of data. The thesis ends with chapter seven that involves a set of recommendations and suggestions for further research. It ends up with the researcher's personal reflections on the thesis journey.
CHAPTER TWO
DEFINING THE CONTEXT

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with providing background information about the context of the study. The chapter starts with a brief description of Oman, its history, geography, and economy. Then, it will shed light on several socio-cultural and political issues that are relevant to the subject matter of study. Following this, a brief description of the population of the study will be also provided. The chapter ends with a summary of the main issues.

2.1 A Brief description of the Sultanate of Oman

Geographically, the Sultanate of Oman is an Arabic country that is located in the Eastern part of the Arabian Gulf region. It is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) that includes six countries in addition to Oman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain (Al Aufi, 2014). The capital city of Oman is Muscat. Socially, people differ in their lifestyle according to whether they live in urban centers or rural places. Those who live in the urban center live a lifestyle that is different from the traditional style practiced by people living in rural places. Life in urban cities is characterized by features of modernization such as colleges, schools, hospitals, public libraries, museums, and the like. Theses have reflections on all aspects of life, particularly the aspect of education. However, opportunities like these are not easily accessible for people in rural places. On the contrary; they are characterized by traditional cultural customs. Economically, Oman depends on oil production in addition to other sources such as agriculture, fishing, and tourism.

The religion of Oman is Islam and the official language is Arabic (Peterson, 2004). However, the people who live in those governorates are
“heterogeneous which is a reflection of Oman’s historical past which included periods of empire and extensive trading with local and distant countries” Ismail, (2011:11). Furthermore, Ismail writes that “Omanis…have a rich mix of ethnicities. Significant proportions of populations are from countries such as Zanzibar. Pakistan…India and Africa.”(ibid).

Oman has witnessed rapid developments since 1970, after the Sultan Qaboos Bin Said became the ruler of Oman. Prior to 1970, Oman had little infrastructure such as roads, schools, and medical care, and “people were poor and disadvantaged” (Ministry of Information, in Al Aufi, 2014:19). The educational history at that time shows that there were three primary schools and no college or university (Al Bandray, Al Shmely, in Al Aufi, 2014). On the contrary, today Oman has many schools and higher education institutions, public and private offering various programs.

2.1.1 English Language Teaching in Oman

The subject matter of the present study is concerned with curriculum design in relation to the area of English language teaching which is considered as a critical issue in language education (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1999). This section intends to shed light on how this issue is dealt with at the government level.

Oman is one of the developing countries that have witnessed reformations in the main sectors: social, economic, and education because of the influential trends of globalization. The recent reformations require special emphasis on the English language as a lingua franca across all life sectors. Therefore, the Omani government was motivated by the recent trends to produce reformations in the education sector and particularly in ELT, which is our concern. The Omani government has considered the importance of English language as a resource for “national development” (Wiley in Al-Jardani, 2012: 41) and a means of communication. Since then, the English language has
received political, economic, and legislative support as evident in the ‘Development of General Education Document’ prepared by the Ministry of Education (cited in Al-Jardani, 2012). Al-Issa (cited in Jirdani, 2012: 41) refers to the Omani government’s consideration of English stating that:

The government recognizes that competence in English is important if Oman is to become an active participant in the new global economy. English is the most common language for international business and commerce, and is the exclusive language in important sectors such as banking and aviation...

Although Arabic is the official language in Oman, English is widely used in business, banks, hospitals, oil companies, hotels, and shopping centers. People in Oman are interested in learning English for the purposes of communication, pursuing higher education, and travelling (Nunan et al., 1987; Al-Issa 2005; 2007; Al-Jardani, 2012). Officially, in education, English language is highly emphasized. This is evident in the policy of curriculum development where English is taught from Grade One in public and private schools (Al Jardani, 2012; Al-Issa, 2007). English is required as a prerequisite for enrolling in institutes and colleges and applying for jobs. In addition, the medium of instruction in private schools and higher education is English (ibid). Overall, Omanis see that English is “the key to success in their professional lives” and is therefore perceived as “a symbol of prestige and an assertion of a superior social status” (Abdel-Jawad and Abu Radwan, 2011: 130).

From critical perspectives, several researchers (like Kanagaragha, 1999; Pennycook, 1999; Phillipson, 1992) believe that the recent spread of English has no longer served educational purposes only. It has expanded to serve other purposes that are cultural, political, and economic that promotes the Western dominance and their ideologies. In this regard, Phillipson points out that “ELT was seen as a means towards political and economic goals, means of securing ties of all kinds with the Third World Countries” (1990: 128). This ideology however is not expected to be adopted in Oman as the Omani
government is aware of the hidden ideologies that have been recurrent with the spread of English as an international language (Al Issa, 2006). English language in Oman is considered as the language of science and technology and a tool of modernization. This perspective is also confirmed by the document of the “Philosophy and Guidelines for the English Language Learning School Curriculum Development” (cited in Al Issa, 2006: 199). That document was prepared by three authors: Nunan (Australia), Walton (UK), and Tyacke (Canadian) as a plan or strategy of ELT in Oman. They conceptualized English as a tool that contributes to the development of science and technology.

2.1.2 Higher Education in Oman

Since the current study is concerned with curriculum design at the tertiary level in a particular context in Oman, it is necessary to shed light on the higher education sector in this country. Since 1970 the higher education in Oman has witnessed considerable development because of the government’s decisions concerned with the development of the Omani human recourses (Al Jadidi, 2009). Carroll and Palermo (2006), who are consultants in the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman, have referred to this development. They confirmed that since the 1970s Oman has witnessed many developments, particularly in the educational sector where many colleges offering a variety of majors and programs have been established.

The developments that the higher education has witnessed are represented by the establishment of the University of Sultan Qaboos (SQU) and many other public institutions. The SQU was established in 1986 and is located in the capital city of Muscat. It is the biggest university in Oman with “10,000 students and seven faculties (Agriculture, Arts, Commerce and Economics, Education, Engineering, Medicine, and Science)” (Al Aufi, 2014: 21). The university provides undergraduate and postgraduate programs in different majors.
During the 1980s, other public institutions were established belonging to different ministries such as “Colleges of Education (under the Ministry of Higher Education), Technical Colleges (under the Ministry of Manpower), and Nursing Institutes (under the Ministry of Health)” (Al Aufi, 2014:23).

Oman has witnessed further development at the higher education level during the 1990s as the country has implemented another strategic shift represented by the establishment of private colleges and institutions. “The private colleges have been established to serve HE students and equip graduates with new required skills for their careers” (Al Aufi, 2014: 23). Further, the Higher Education Ministry “implemented credible degree programs from foreign countries such as the UK and Australia” (ibid). Oman has now 60 private institutions offering diploma and bachelor degrees.

Annually, The Ministry of Higher Education provides scholarships to the growing number of Omani students to pursue their education at the graduate and postgraduate levels. The scholarships are internal and external. The internal scholarships are awarded by the government to the students whose families are on ‘social security benefits’ to join colleges within the Sultanate. The external scholarships are also provided by the government, but for overseas colleges in the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, and others.

Because of the establishment of public and private colleges in Oman, the need to accredit these institutions arose. Therefore, the Omani government has implemented the national quality assurance (QA) framework to ensure the development of higher education (Carroll, et.al. 2009; Carroll and Palermo, 2006).

For the purpose of ensuring the quality of higher education in public and private universities and colleges and the imported educational programs the government took a serious decision that is concerned with the development of a national framework of quality assurance. The system of Omani quality assurance has further developed to approach the latest stage in 2001.
represented by developing what is called Oman accreditation Council (OAC). The function of this organization is to set policies and frameworks and develop national quality assurance for higher institutions in Oman (for further discussion of OAC sees Al Aufi, 2014; Carol et.al. 2009; Al-Hinai, 2011).

2.2 Description of the Context of the Study

In order to provide a holistic understanding of teachers and students’ beliefs about course design, which is the aim of this study it is necessary to provide an overall description of the college and department where the study takes place.

The college has only one campus. It includes three academic departments offering diploma and bachelor degrees in three different majors: English Department, Information and Technology Department, and Business and Accounting Department. In addition, the college has a Foundation Unit as a supporting department that offers integrated courses in English and courses in Mathematics and Computer to the majority of the college students before joining the academic majors. It offers intensive courses in English with the aim of preparing students for their academic majors. Upon joining the college, all students sit for a placement test in order to determine their English proficiency level based on which they placed in Level 1, or Level two, or skip both levels to join their majors once they demonstrate a high level of proficiency in the placement test and pass an interview with written component.

The college is distinguished by its focus on the infrastructure including buildings, data system, and grounds. All classrooms are computerized and provided with modern technology represented by smart boards and overhead projectors. The academic year in this College has two semesters, distributed as Semester One and Semester two. Each semester is of 17 weeks including the exam period.
2.2.1 Political Issues Concerned with the Context of Study

The context where the study takes place has its academic policy. The context of study is a private college. However, it operates dependently on the Ministry of Higher Education through following the policy of the ministry and its legislative requirements concerning the policy of attendance, course titles, number of credit hours, and, penalty of plagiarism. This is formally stated in a framework called “The Strategic Plan” which is issued by an outstanding unit called Quality Assurance.

The Strategic Plan is a formal document designed in a template form including the vision and mission of the college followed by a set of values and norms reflecting the academic policy of the college. For example, the vision statement reflects the goal of the college regarding the role of students in the future as illustrated in this statement: “Our students, alumni, and faculty are leading voices in the economic and cultural development of the nation, both locally and regionally.” Also, the college has the mission statement reflecting the objective of the college regarding students’ preparation for future purposes as illustrated in this quote “To provide graduates with the knowledge and skills needed to contribute to the well-being of our nation and to actively involve our faculty and staff in the advancement of the public, business, and nonprofit sectors of the society” (Adapted from the Strategic Plan, Quality Assurance of the College). In addition, it includes actions, goals, objectives, and strategies to be implemented by the administrative and academic staff.

In spite of its dependence on the Higher Education Ministry in relation to some issues, the college has its own policy regarding staff recruitment, admission of students, and curriculum development. With regard to recruiting the administrative and academic staff the decision is taken by the stakeholders in the college. The majority of administrative staff is Omnis, while the majority of academic staff is expatriates.
In relation to the policy of students’ admission, there is a kind of flexibility. First, it accepts hundreds of students coming from high schools who were not admitted in the public universities. Even students with low grades can enroll in the college. Second, the college offers opportunities for students who work in different sectors and are interested in pursuing their academic study to obtain the Diploma and Bachelor degrees. Third, the college offers morning and evening classes. Fourth, the college separates male from female students and this is of high favor for most students since they are coming from conservative families and are against the idea of mixed classes.

Most of the students are from Omani nationality, and very few of them are from other nationalities. The medium of instruction is English in all departments except for three courses, Arabic, Islamic, and Communication Skills.

With respect to discussing any critical issues that touch the politics, culture, and society of the country, teachers have to be very conscious and conservative inside and outside classroom. This is also applicable to the courses that are based on political issues such as Critical Approach, Sociolinguistics, and Oman Society. This is due to the national policy and the type of students who don’t have political background and interest that motivate them to engage in political discussions. However, political issues such as gender discrepancy, justice and equality, racism can be discussed, but with more conservatism by teachers for the same reasons (the national policy and students' background).

2.2.2 Description of the Curriculum of the English Department

The Department of English is one of the three major specialties in the College. It accepts students passing all the levels in the Foundation Unit. It provides degrees in diploma, advanced diploma, and bachelor in English language literature and translation. The English department has a mission
statement and a written curriculum, core program goals, course description, and objectives for each course.

The curriculum of the English department was initiated by a curriculum committee under the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman since the establishment of the college. The committee was concerned with the specification of the courses to be offered for the bachelor and diploma degrees. The specification also included the goals of the learning objectives. However other aspects of the curriculum such as development of the goals at the course level, materials selection, the articulation of particular courses content, and students’ assessment are specified or decided by the English department.

After a few years of the establishment of the college, the Department of English formed a curriculum committee involving three groups that are organized according to three specialties: English language and linguistics, English literature, and translation. Each group involves three faculty staff members. Their nomination has been decided by the department according to their specialty. The English language and linguistics committee involves teachers whose major is language and linguistics, whereas the literature committee involves teachers whose major is English literature. Importantly, none of those teachers is specialized in curriculum studies, but they are experienced in EFL teaching.

Overall, the curriculum committee is concerned with certain aspects of curriculum design as mentioned above. At the level of materials design, the department or local committee meets every academic year to decide the textbook for every course. The choice of the textbook is determined by certain considerations such as teachers and students’ feedback after using a textbook, to what extent the textbook is teachable in terms of activities, skills, exercises, as well as students’ needs (proficiency of English, cultural background, and learning objectives). It is worth mentioning that there is a noticeable flexibility provided for teachers in the department. In other words,
the teachers are not committed to solely rely on the textbook. Rather, they are free in their choice of other supplementary materials for implementing their courses.

In relation to the development of the learning objectives of every course, it is a shared responsibility between members of the committee and the course teacher. Before starting the semester, every teacher has to complete a template of what is called “Course Plan” for each course he teaches (see Appendix 5) with a major focus on the development of the learning objectives. Then, the template is revised or modified by the committee members.

Like any academic program, the program in this department offers a variety of courses. The courses are distributed into eight semesters: four semesters for the diploma degree and four semesters for the bachelor degree. The minimum credit hours required for obtaining a Bachelor’s degree is 126 credit hours and 63 for the Diploma degree (Appendix 1). The department has six goal statements describing the department’s goals and seven goals statement describing the students learning goals as has been mentioned previously are general goals and are stated by the committee at the Ministry of Higher education. On the other hand, the other set involves goals that are specific and stated by the English department in relation to the courses and majors offered (for further description of the courses offered in this department see Appendix 2).

2.2.3 Cultural issues

The aim of this section is to shed light on certain cultural issues, values, and assumptions in relation to the context of study. As an Arabic country Oman is deeply rooted in Arabic traditions and Islamic culture. Officially, Islam dominates all aspects of life, and education is one of them.

The context of study is located in an Omani city whose population are Omanis. We can say that the community of students is monoculture
represented by students from Omani nationality. Therefore, the majority of students has the same cultural background and shares the same values and beliefs. The administrative staff is also Omanis. On the contrary, the community of teachers is multicultural since all academics are coming from different nationalities: Indians, Pakistanis, Arabs from different nationalities, and Americans. In order to avoid any cultural challenges and conflicts, the college sets on a number of regulations that commit teachers to follow and respect.

From my seven year experience in this context, I have noticed that the Islamic culture in general and the local culture in particular are reflected on the decisions of the college and curriculum development which is the core of this study. For example, one of the cultural aspects that the college has to consider is gender distribution that is isolating female students from male students. Therefore, there are two types of classrooms: morning classrooms with only females (those who never accept studying with males) and mixed evening classrooms with females and males.

The local culture is dominating the process of curriculum development at all stages: preparatory, implementations, and evaluation. At the preparatory stage which involves designing the courses for particular subjects, the teachers and departments have to be very conscious. In the Department of English, although teachers are granted much flexibility in designing their courses, they are restricted by the culture of the context. With regard to the course content, the teacher has to select the topics that are suitable to the students’ culture and avoid any topics that are islamically and socially unacceptable.

With regard to materials design, the local culture also imposes restrictions on the design of materials, particularly using authentic materials inside the classroom. The majority of students are coming from conservative families, and so they don’t accept materials such as films, songs, games, and the like.
At the classroom level, the local culture is also dominant. This is reflected in the students’ style of learning and their preferences. In this regard, Al-Issa describes the conflict between the pedagogical ideologies of ELT and the Omani’s ideology of ELT. He argues that:

> cultural appropriateness still serves colonizing the students’ minds and values so as to produce domesticated natives, who think within limits and acquire predefined knowledge, but don’t criticize, analyze, question, or examine...The conflict appeared to be evident in the inclusion and exclusion of literature, the nature and level of songs, rhymes and stories, exposure to native speaker and use of advanced educational technology to increase contact with the target language culture.

(2005: 268)

Based on teachers and my own observations, I further add that the local culture is reflected on students’ classroom practices and behaviors. The students appear to be shy, uncommunicative, and less interactive particularly in mixed classrooms where sitting in circles for discussion, or preparing for oral presentations are almost missing.

### 2.3 Description of the Population of Study

At the institutional level, the population concerned with this study fell into three categories: academic staff, administrative staff, and students. The academic staff involves bilingual teachers who speak Arabic and English coming from different Arabic countries such as Iraqis, Jordanians, Egyptians, Tunisians, and Sudanese. Other teachers are coming from India and Pakistan. Most of these teachers have postgraduate degrees from either Arabic or Indian universities. Very few of them are graduates from Western universities. The majority of them have several years of teaching experience in different countries. In the Foundation Unit, the situation is different as the staff is mixed, Omanis and non-Omanis, Arabs and Indians. Most of them are holding Bachelor degrees in English language and literature.
According to the category of student population, we can say that the majority of students in this college are Omanis. Some students are from the UAE, but very few from Arab countries. The language of instruction in classroom is English, but outside classroom is Arabic. The students are rarely exposed to English except through the satellite channels and the Internet. This causes some difficulties in communication and interaction in classroom.

**Summary of the Chapter**

The current chapter has shed light on certain issues that contribute to understanding the context where the study takes place. Specifically, it provided an overall picture about the history of Oman, the sector of higher education, and the status of the English as an international language from political and cultural perspectives. The second part of the chapter is concerned with shedding light on the context of the college that is directly relating to our case study. In this part, we examined how the curriculum is design, and how the socio-cultural and political issues are influencing the subject matter of this study-course design.
CHAPTER THREE
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with addressing the concept of course design from theoretical and empirical perspectives. The chapter is organized into five sections. The first section provides some definitions of course design. The second section presents several models that deal with shaping or framing course design. Section three sheds light on the principles underlining course design. Section four introduces components of course design. Finally, the chapter ends with a section devoted for reviewing several studies relevant to the investigated phenomenon.

3.1 Course Design: Definition

The notion of course design is made up of the two terms ‘course’ and ‘design’ (Srijono, 2007). The term course is defined as a sequence of learning experiences that are planned for particular learning sessions (Hutchinson and Waters, 1991; Rowntree, 1981). The term design, on the other hand refers to the overall plan or framework that serves “to work in creating the final product” (Srijono, 2007: 122).

Hutchinson and Waters use the term “course design” or “designing a course” to refer to “an integrated series of teaching-learning experiences, whose ultimate aim is to lead the learners to a particular state of knowledge” (1991:65). They further provide a detailed description of the process pointing out that:

Designing a course is fundamentally a matter of asking questions in order to provide a reasoned basis for the subsequent processes of syllabus design, materials writing, classroom teaching and evaluation.
We need to know a very wide range of questions: general and specific, theoretical and practical. Some of these questions will be answered by research; others will rely more on the tuition and experience of the teacher; yet other will call on theoretical models…

The questions are concerned with the following:

“Why does the student need to learn?
Who is going to be involved in the process?
Where is the learning to take place?
When is the learning to take place?
What do the students need to learn?
How will the learning process be achieved?”

(Adapted from Hutchinson and Waters, 1991: 21).

Graves (2000: 3) views course design as a process that is composed of several key components that “comprise setting objectives based on some form of assessment; determining content, materials, and method; and evaluation”.

Robinson (1991:34) provides a comprehensive definition of ESP course design of which EAP, the main concern of this study, is a main branch. He states that:

ESP course design is the product of a dynamic interaction between a number of elements: the results of the need analysis, the course designers’ approach to syllabus and methodology, and existing materials (if any). All of these are modified by the contextual constraints.

As has been stated in chapter one of this thesis that it would be helpful to distinguish between three interrelated terms: course design, course development, and curriculum development in order to avoid any confusion for the readers. Some authors (like Diamond, 2008; Macalister and Nation, 2010) use the terms curriculum and course interchangeably on the basis that the latter involves not only the stage of planning but also the subsequent stages—implementation and evaluation of a course. However, other authors (like Graves, 2000; 1996; Richards, 2013) argue against the idea of using these
terms interchangeably. Likewise, the focus of this study is on the process of
course design as one part—the planning stage—of the whole process of course
development (see Figure: 1.1) which in turn is part of a complete process or
area that is curriculum development.

3.2 Models of course Design

This section sheds light on some models of course design. This is not for the
purpose of comparison, nor for evaluation, but for the purpose of providing a
comprehensive view of the process. All these models are directly concerned
with language course design except the ones by Brown (1995) and Nation
and Macalister (2010) are concerned with curriculum design at the broadest
level. However, they will be reviewed for their direct relevance to course
design in terms of their focus on the same components of course that all
models agree on.

The literature on course design has introduced a number of models and
frameworks that have been developed by specialists in the field of language
curriculum development. For example, Dubin and Olishtain (1987) presented
considerable work on course design taking into consideration the factors
contributing to constructing courses such as materials design, developing
goals and objectives, syllabus design. Their work is of high value since it is
intended for teachers who are involved in planning their courses at a large
scale level or their institutional level.

Yalden (1987) added a further considerable contribution to the course design
literature throughout her model called: “Stages in Language Program
Development”. In terms of components, the model is not so much different
from others. However, it is distinguished in its focus on providing teachers
with practical suggestions that help them devise classroom procedures and
materials in accordance with learners’ needs.
In 1995, Brown developed a coherent approach for language curriculum development that is presented in a form of model called: “Systematic approach to designing and maintaining Language Curriculum”. The model includes two sets. One set involves stages for curriculum development such as needs analysis, objectives, testing, materials, and teaching. The other set involves components for the evaluation of the program. In his overview of curriculum, Brown argues that “language teachers have long been faced with a plethora of methods from which to choose” (1995:1). Each method, he thinks, imposes on a language teacher particular principles and criteria regarding language and learning styles.

Nation and Macalister (2010:4) developed an important model called “a model of the parts of the curriculum design process” indicating that course design is the central part of the process of curriculum design. The importance of the model lies in providing particular principles and guidelines underpinning each component of course design. This is helpful for teachers and those who are involved in designing courses as it provides them with the essential aspects and issues associating with course design. The model comprises a range of sub-processes and factors that make up the process of curriculum design. It consists of three outer circles and one inner circle. The three outer circles are described in terms of “environment”, “needs”, and “principles”. The inner circle that is course design consists of “goals” which is the center of the circle and three basic components: the “content and sequencing”, “format and presentation”, and “monitoring and assessing” (ibid).

Within the field of English for specific courses (ESP) where needs analysis is the “primacy” (Dudley-Evans and ST John, 2004: 3) several models have been presented. Among those models is the one by Hutchinson and Waters (1991) who view course design as "a matter of asking questions in order to provide a reasoned basis for the subsequent processes of syllabus design, materials writing, classroom teaching and evaluation" (1991:20).
Jordan (1997) has also presented a comprehensive model of course design which is of practical value for teachers of English for academic purposes (EAP) as one type of English for specific purposes (ESP). His model is portrayed in a framework including these components: needs analysis, objectives, means, syllabus, and methodology.

Having provided an overall idea about the models and frameworks of course design, it is time now to present and examine closely a very important model by Graves (2000). Graves’s recent model (2000) which is further developed from her previous one (1996) and from other classic and recent models, is called “A Framework of Course Development Process”. It portrays course design as a combination of processes that are linked together in a form of flow chart. Figure 3.2 illustrates the names of components and the way they are organized.

The focus in this study will be on Graves’s model (2000). This is because first, it draws on the rationale that “teachers are the best to develop their courses” (2000:5) and this is clearly indicated in one of its basic component, ‘articulating beliefs’ as in Figure 3.1. Thus, in terms of focus and aims, this model is compatible with my study that seeks to understand the role of teachers in course design. Second, in comparison to other models, Graves’s model presents the components in a clear way in addition to providing a detailed discussion for each component involving techniques and guidelines that are helpful for the analysis and evaluation of course design. The study will also make use of other models for the purpose of relying on a more solid theoretical background.
The framework portrays course design as a process that comprises a number of components such as needs assessment, developing materials, formulating goals and objectives, etc. Examining the framework above one can notice that "there is no hierarchy in the processes and no sequence in their accomplishment" (Graves, 2000:3). This means that a teacher can start with any component in the framework on the basis of his beliefs and contextual understandings that are considered as basic components. Therefore, they are stated at the bottom of the chart “to serve as the foundation of the other processes” (ibid).

3.3 Principles of Course Design

Having presented models of course design in section 3.2, it has been noticed that the process is complex as it is assembled of a number of components, each with special requirements. In practice, course designers and teachers must consider a few questions such as which element to start with, how to arrange the elements in a principled manner, and what learners need, and so on. For this purpose, there are several underlying principles and assumptions based on different philosophical approaches that contribute to designing
courses in a principled way. This section, therefore presents a set of principles that form the basis of designing a relevant, coherent, and meaningful course.

3.3.1 The Starting Point of Course Design

The literature on language curriculum shows that there is a conflict among the approaches underpinning course design regarding the issue of “the starting point in course design” (Yalden, 1987: 69). The conflict is about which component to start with when designing a course. Is it logical to start with methodology, or syllabus design, or developing learning outcomes? Those are the three basic dimensions of a language curriculum. On the basis of these dimensions, Richards (2013) refers to the distinction between three types of curriculum design: forward, central, and backward that stand for the three basic dimensions of a course: syllabus (input), methodology (process), and learning outcomes (output), respectively as shown in Figure 3.2. Although Richards works on a broad level of curriculum design, he addresses an essential issue—the starting point—that must be also considered when designing a language course. This is because the three dimensions as in Figure 3.2 below are considered as key components in designing a language course. In what follows is a brief description of those types of design that might be of value for teachers who are involved in the process of course design.

Figure 3.2 Dimensions of a Curriculum (Richards, 2013:7)
**Forward design** begins with decisions about the input. That is with decisions about what to teach followed by decisions about the methodology, how to teach, and then decisions about the output, the outcomes and goals. This approach has been criticized by Tessmer and Wedman (1990) for being static since it advocates that the basic element of a particular curriculum must be arranged in a linear or straightforward order (see section 3.3.2).

This approach is described by Hutchinson and Waters in terms of “language-centered course design” (1991: 67) and they also criticize it for its inflexibility and systematization. With regard to its inflexibility, Hutchinson and Waters argue that this model is “static and inflexible” (ibid) and being so means that once a teacher or course designer has initially prepared any aspects of language, he or she cannot change them later. However, this contradicts with the belief that a learning situation including learners’ needs is changeable and is always influenced by contextual factors. With regard to systematization, Hutchinson and waters argue that this model is based on the false belief that systematic analysis and presentation of language leads to systematic learning. They believe that language learning is complex and cannot be simply built on systematic analysis or presentation of language. In summary, they believe that the idea of following inflexible procedures and a straightforward logical order in course design doesn’t produce learning.

**Central curriculum design** is the second way for starting a language course. It is different from forward design in that it starts with determining the methodology and teaching activities rather than starting with a detailed specification of the course content and goals (Richards, 2013; Freeman, 1996, Yelden, 1987). This perspective is supported by certain approaches to language teaching such as the Natural approach, Immersion, approach, Communicative approach, and the Process-orientated approach that consider “methodology first” (Yalden, 1987:70). Proponents of these approaches are much more concerned about methodology when designing a course that is with “the ways learners act upon and interact” in the classroom (Yalden: 1987:74). Their argument draws on the rational that a language classroom
and courses must be managed to foster communicative competence with the purpose of encouraging learners to use language communicatively in a professional way (Breen and Candling, 1980). This implies that when designing a language course, a teacher should think of the suitable techniques, materials and a classroom environment where learners can practice their “abilities of interpretation, expression, and negotiation” (Yalden, 1987: 73) to achieve the goal of gaining communicative proficiency.

**Backward design**- refers to the curriculum approach that begins with “a specification of learning outcomes as the basis for developing instructional processes and input” (Rihards, 2013:20). It is a common approach in the profession of curriculum design that has been traditionally described as an “ends-means” approach in the work of Tyler and Taba who considered “instruction as the specification of ends as a pre-requisite to devising the means to reach them” (cited in Richards, 2013: 20). In language teaching, the backward approach involves certain methods and procedures such as needs analysis, task-based, and the competency-based approach.

In response to the question: Which approach is best? Richards states that “there is no best approach to curriculum design, and that forward design, central design and backward design might work well but in different circumstances” (2013: 44). For example, the forward design is preferred in contexts where there is a central curriculum and teachers have no choice. In such contexts teachers depend on textbooks and commercial materials rather than “teacher-design resources” (ibid). In central design, teachers are given the privilege of autonomy. They do not need to follow specific goals and pre-designed syllabus. The option of a backward design, however might be attractive in contexts where a “high degree of accountability needs to be built into the curriculum design and where resources can be committed to needs analysis, planning, and material development” (ibid).

Similar to Richards, Graves (2000) argues that “deciding where to begin will depend on how you problematize your situation, that is, how you determine
the challenges that you can most productively address within the context.” What we understand from Graves is that the decision of where to begin in designing a course is based on understanding the context and addressing its challenges. This in turn demands from a teacher to be highly reflective in order to understand his or her options, make choices, and take responsibility for those choices.

3.3.2 Manner of Sequencing Components in Course Design

The second important question in course design is what kind of path or manner to follow in order to sequence components of a course? In response to such questions, there are two methods, either in a linear or in a non-linear order. Sequencing the components in a linear or forward order is based on the “Waterfall Model” where “the output of one phase in the process serves as input to the next phase” (Tessmer and Wedman, 1990: 77). Within each component, there is a range of stages and steps to follow. For example, in designing a language course, it usually begins with analysis of the learning environment or situation and the learners’ needs, and then progresses to considering the other elements of a course such as the goals, content, methodology, and evaluation.

In spite of its systematization, The Waterfall approach has been criticized by several authors (like Nation and Macalister, 2010; Graves, 2000; 1996; Tessmer and Wedman, 1990; Hutchinson and Waters, 1991) for its static nature and impracticality. With regard to the static nature, Graves criticizes the literature that conceptualizes course design as “a logical, rational sequence” which advocates conducting a needs assessment first in order to move to the development of goals as a second element, and then to the third one, and so on (2000:5). Graves argues that “at the course level this logical sequence is often impractical or unproductive and has the effect of making teachers feel that they are doing something wrong if they don’t follow it” (ibid). Accordingly, she suggests a more feasible and manageable model of course
design for teachers as the case in her model, in which a teacher can work on more than one component at the same time.

Hutchinson and Waters (1991) argue that the idea of logical order in terms of systematization in course design contradicts with dynamism and development across all stages of the process. In this regard they point out that:

Course design is a dynamic process. It doesn’t move in a linear fashion from initial analysis to completed course. Needs and resources vary with time. The course design, therefore, needs to have built-in feedback channels to enable the course to respond to developments.

Regarding the problem of impracticality, Nation and Macalister raise the issue of the feasibility and resources available for teachers. Accordingly, they ask how a teacher of English can collect perfect information about students before meeting them. This is the first challenge and the second challenge is that it is not feasible for teachers with limited time and other resources to complete each component in order to move to the next one.

As a solution to the problem of the “Sequential Waterfall Model”, Tessmer and Wedman (1990: 82) came up with their model “The Layers-of-Necessity Model”. The model is made up of a matrix of layers as shown in figure 3.3. Each layer is a model of design since it encompasses the five basic components:

- “Situational Assessment
- Goal and Task Analysis
- Instructional Strategy Development
- Materials Development
- Evaluation and Revision”

In addition to the components, each layer consists of a set of tasks that are distinguished in terms of levels rather than types. The essential perspective of this model entails that “based upon the time and resources available … the
The developer chooses a layer of design and development activities to incorporate into an instructional product" (Tessmer and Wedman, 1990: 79). The layers are distinguished in terms of sophistication with regard to the qualities of a given situation such as the time and recourses available. The layers are distinguished in terms of sophistication with regard to the qualities of a given situation such as the time and recourses available.

The starting point according to this approach is a matter of choice which means that a course designer can start from any layer but in accordance with the time and the available resources. Tessmer and Wedman state that the decision is determined by balancing the time and recourse available to do the curriculum design and the level of thoroughness needed.

**Figure 3.3: A layers of necessity model (Tessmer and Wedman, 1990: 79)**

3.3.3 Integration in Course Design

Integration or alignment (Fink, 2003) in course design is a crucial principle that determines “the success of any learning environment” (Reeves, 2006: 302) by creating relevant, coherent, and meaningful courses (Graves, 2000; Fink, 2003; 2009, Whetten, 2007; Cohen, 1987). With reference to the principle of integrated course design (ICD), Fink (2007: 14) states that “The basic idea behind ICD is that...we need to design our courses in a way that is
learning-centered, systematic, and integrated”. This way helps students to engage in the learning process.

The idea of alignment means creating connection among the components of course design. Graves (2000:4) describes this process clearly as follows:

Course design is a system in the sense that planning for one component will contribute to others; changes to one component will influence all the others. If you are clear and articulate about content, it will be easier to write objectives. If you change the content, the objectives will need to change…as will the materials and assessment plan… and so on.

In contrast, misalignment leads to ineffective course design that will cause a negative impact on classroom learning. In an attempt to solve this problem, Whetten (2007: 352) provides an alignment matrix that consists of learning objectives that are designed in a manner to fit the learning activities as well as question items (for further discussion see Whetten, 2007).

3.3.4 Course design is a dynamic Process

Graves describes the dynamism of course design "as work in progress" (2000: 7). This implies that course design is changeable and accepts modification at the level of a single component or at the level of the whole process. The rationale behind this principle is due to the association of course design with teaching (Graves, 2000; Brown, 1995, Yalden, 1987). Since "teaching is an organic, unpredictable, challenging, satisfying, and frustrating process" (Graves: 7), a course or its components should be modified to be more "responsive" to a "particular group". For example, formulation of goals has to be changed or adapted every year in accordance with the students' level and the "changes in knowledge in the field". Similarly, Hutchinson and Waters (1991) argue that course design must be “dynamic and interactive” in the sense that it is determined by factors that have greater impact on designing its basic components. Brown (1995:6) also supports this idea when
he states that "Language teaching is a dynamic field that no doubt will continue to produce new and exciting ways of defining what students need".

In her framework of language course design, Yalden (1987: 99) refers to this characteristic in terms of "adaptability" or flexibility. In this sense, she means that a framework must accommodate variation in teachers' styles as well as in learners' preferences" taking into account the other units of a course such as the goals and methodology.

3.4 Components of Course Design

Having examined the models of course design in section 3.2 we can conclude that in spite of certain minor differences among them, they overlap in one characteristic, that is the key components. Most of the models deal with course design as a process that is composed of some key components or learning elements. The components that all models agree on are learner needs, contextual identification, goals formulation, syllabus design, conceptualization of content, material design, and criteria of evaluation. This section will shed light on the basic components with the purpose of indicating their role in building up the process of course design.

3.4.1 Defining the context

“Defining the context” (Graves, 2000) or “situation analysis” (Richards, 2007) is viewed as the basic element in course design. Graves considers it as the foundation of course design and this is shown in her model (Figure 3.1). Similarly, other specialists in course design (like Dubin and Olishain, 1987; Yalden, 1987) consider the notion of context as a pre-stage that has to be done before processing course design. According to Graves, designing a course “is a grounded process” which means that “when you design a course, you design it for a specific group of people, in a specific setting, or for a specific amount of time, in short for a specific context” (2000: 15). Defining
the context helps a teacher to gain more information which contributes in making decisions about what and how to teach.

Going through the literature on curriculum development, we can notice that there is much emphasis on the importance of considering the context in designing particular courses. This is evident in the distinction between EAP, ESP, EFL, and ESL that represent various settings that teachers and course developers have to be aware of. For example designing an EAP course is different from designing an ESP course. The first one needs a special context that includes a particular group of students at the high school or academic level who need English to achieve academic purposes. Designing an ESP, on the other hand, needs a particular group of learners, not necessary students, who need English to achieve other than academic purposes such as English for airport, business, information technology, and the like. Furthermore, the importance of considering the context lies in making the teacher more realistic about what to teach in order to accomplish realistic goals. “Knowing what equipment or support is available will help us make choices about how much and what kind of material to prepare” (Graves, 2000: 17).

In curriculum development, context might be viewed at the specific level and at the broadest level. At the specific level, context refers to a particular teaching learning setting represented by the classroom, the school, the institution, a specific group of teachers and students, and specific learning topics (Graves, 2008; 2000; 1996). It also involves issues to be considered at the course level such as the level of students, the length of the course, and the setting where the course is taking place. At the broadest level, viewing context means more than considering these factors, but other factors that are social, cultural, political, and psychological that might affect the learning situation.

Richards (2007) uses the term “situation analysis” instead of “defining context”. He considers “situation analysis” as a procedure used to analyze the factors that determine the success of a language program. He refers to three
factors that determine the effectiveness of curriculum development: institutional factors, teacher factors, and learner factors (for further discussion see Richards, 2007).

3.4.2 Articulating Beliefs

Generally, in education literature the term belief is defined by Pajaras (1992: 316) as “an individual’s judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition”. A further detailed definition is provided by Borg as “a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further it serves as a guide to thought and behavior” (2001:186).

For the past decade, the concept of beliefs has been the core of many research papers in education and particularly in language teaching (Borg, 2003; 2006; Graves, 2000; Clark and Peterson, 1986; Farrell and Lim, 2005; Richards and Lockhart, 2007; Pajaras, 1992, Freeman, 1992). This is based on Borg’s argument (2001) that by means of beliefs, teachers make sense of the world and evaluate events in their setting and accordingly they take decisions about teaching. Likewise, Graves (2000) argues for the consideration of the value of beliefs but in relation to course design. She refers to the concept of beliefs as “articulating beliefs” and considers it as the foundation of course design. Her argument is based on the rationale that articulating beliefs guides teachers to design and implement their courses effectively since their beliefs are based on their previous and present experience in their professional context.

From pedagogical perspectives, teachers’ beliefs are concerned with pedagogic issues such as teaching, learning, students, and articulating learning elements of a course. In an answer to the question “How do beliefs affect the actual designing of a course?” Graves points out that teacher’s beliefs affect every stage of course design. “They may not always be present in your thinking, but they underlie the decisions you take”. (2000: 33). It is
worth remarking that this concept is of high value in this study since the latter draws on investigating teachers and students' beliefs in a particular context.

With regard to the question how teachers articulate their beliefs in designing language courses, Graves recommends adopting Stern’s framework that involves four aspects:

- Beliefs about language
- Beliefs about the social context of language
- Beliefs about language and learners
- Beliefs about teaching

Each of those aspects involves certain issues to consider (for further details see Graves, 2000: 28-32).

However, the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices is not always consistent, in the sense that teachers don’t always act in accordance to their beliefs. This is because the relationship is determined by contextual factors involving the policy and culture of the institution (Phipps and Borg, 2009). The difference between teachers’ beliefs and practices has been considered as a crucial issue in language teaching and accordingly it has received much attention in research on this field (for example, Phipps and Borg, 2009; Lee, 2008; Freeman, 2002; 1992). In an empirical study examining grammar teachers’ beliefs, Phipps and Borg argue against the idea of considering the differences between teachers’ beliefs and practices as “an undesirable negative phenomenon” (2009: 380). On the contrary, they argue for a more “positive perspective on such differences” (ibid). Their argument supports Freeman’s claim (1996; 1992) who considers the tension between teachers’ beliefs and practices as a powerful strategy for teachers learning. Their argument also supports the conceptualization of this tension as a crucial step in teachers’ professional development (Golombek and Johnson, 2004).
3.4.3 Needs Analysis

Needs analysis or needs assessment is defined by Graves as “a systematic and ongoing process of gathering information about students' needs and preferences, interpreting the information, and then making course decisions based on the interpretation in order to meet the needs” (2000: 98).

Needs analysis is viewed as the basic component in course design upon which the other components such as the goals of the course, activities, topics, and assessments and evaluations are built (Richards, 2007; Brown, 1995; Jordan, 2004; Brindley, 1989). The value of its importance lies in its relatedness to students' involvement in the process of course design. It is based on the belief that learning is a teacher-student interaction, rather than merely a matter of learners’ “absorbing preselected knowledge” (Graves: 2000: 98).

As teachers we need to know what kind of information we have to gather about our students. For this, Graves provides a very useful and simple illustration where the information is organized according to both the present status of the students and the future (goals of a course). Regarding the present status, the information involves the level of the learners' language proficiency, the level of the learners' cultural competence, learners' interest, preferences, and attitudes. The information about their future involves their goals and expectations, the learning context, types of communicative skills and tasks they need to perform, and language aspects they will use.

“What needs to be learned” (Nation and Macalister, 2010: 24) is a crucial issue within the notion of needs analysis. For this purpose, there are three approaches underlying the type of needs to be focused on. One approach is by Munby called ‘target-situation analysis’ that focuses on “the students’ needs at the end of a language course, and target-level performance” (Jordan, 2004). The second approach is advocated by Richterich and Chancerel called “present-situation analysis” concerned with “the students’ state of language at the beginning of the language course” (Jordan, 2004:
24). The third approach is advocated by Hutchinson and Waters (1991) called the ‘learning-centered approach’. In light of this approach, Hutchinson and Waters make a distinction between ‘target needs’ and ‘learning needs’. Target needs are concerned with “what the learner needs to do in the target situation”, whereas learning needs are concerned with what the learner needs to do in the learning situation”. Furthermore, Hutchinson and Waters analyze target needs into three types: ‘necessities’, ‘lacks’, and ‘wants’. Below is a brief definition of each type:

**Necessities**-involve what is important for students to know in order to act effectively in the target situation.

**Lacks**-involve any gaps between what the students already know and the target situation.

**Wants**-involve what the students wish to learn.

Learners’ needs can also be categorized in terms of ‘objective needs ‘and ‘subjective needs’ (Hutchinson and Waters, 1991). Both ‘necessities’ and ‘lacks’ fit to objective needs, while ‘wants’ fit into subjective needs (Jordan, 2004). The crucial issue, in this respect, concerns learners’ subjective needs that might conflict with teachers or course designers’ beliefs (Jordan, 2004). For example, a language course may focus on writing, while students are concerned with improving their speaking skills. In this regard, Jordan says “there is no easy answer to this, but it is important that these views are taken into consideration” (2004: 26). McDonough (1984) points out that in this case, teachers need to take into consideration their students’ views and attitudes along with needs analysis. This requires from teachers to be more flexible and adapt their courses in accordance to the learning situation.

In order to collect information about students for needs analysis, Graves (2000) and Richards (2007) provide a set of practical procedures involving ‘questionnaires’ ‘interviews’, ‘charts’, ‘lists’, ‘writing activities’, ‘group discussions’, etc. (for further discussion of these procedures see Graves, 2000 and Richards, 2007).
3.4.4 Conceptualizing content

Among the key components in course design is the one of content (Graves, 2000; 1996; Nation and Macalister, 2010). The element of content is referred to in different terms such as “conceptualizing content” (Graves, 2000), syllabus design (Yalden, 1987; Dubin and Olishtain, 1987), “selection and sequencing units of a particular subject” (Nation and Macalister, 2010), while Richards (2013) refers to it in terms of “input”. Graves, however, prefers the term “conceptualizing content” rather than the traditional term syllabus design because she views it as a “conceptual process” (2000:39) that requires from a teacher to figure out what aspects of language to teach, emphasize, and integrate on the basis of teacher’s thoughts and beliefs. Some approaches of curriculum design prioritize the element of content and consider it as the starting point (as was mentioned in section 3.3.1). In this regard, Richards states that “It seems logical to assume that before we can teach a language; we need to decide what linguistic content to teach” (2013:6). The content of a language course is also considered to be the base of the whole process of course designs, upon which the next stage that is the process (methodology) will be established which in turn contributes to achieving the outcomes of the program. Similarly, Graves (2000; 1996) considers it as the backbone of designing a course. The following discussion provides a brief outline of the process of conceptualizing content adapted from Graves (2000).

“What does it mean to conceptualize content?”

In response to this question, Graves states that “conceptualizing content is a multifaceted process which involves:

- Thinking about what you want your students to learn in the course, given who they are, their needs, and the purpose of the course;
- Making decisions about what to include and emphasize and what to drop;
- Organizing the content in a way that will help you to see the relationship
among various elements so that you make decisions about objectives, materials, sequence and evaluation” (2000: 38).

However, in designing a language course, conceptualizing content is not an easy task. Experts in curriculum design (for example Graves, 2000; 1996; Richards, 2007; Brown, 1995; Nunan, 1988; Yalden, 1987; Dubin and Olshtain, 1987) agree that what to teach or what to focus on in a language course is a demanding task. This is because language teaching is a complex process (Richards, 2007) and is no longer viewed from only structural perspectives where the focus is mainly on grammar and vocabulary aspects. Rather, teaching language has been influenced by the recent approaches such as the communicative approach, the task-based approach, and the content-based approach, and the like (Graves, 2000; 1996; Richards, 2013, 2007; Brown, 1995; Dubin and Olshtain, 1987). For example, “The language content dimension has extended to include notional and functional meaning along with structures, situations, and themes” (Dubin and Olshtain, 1987: 106). Moreover, socio-cultural and psychological theories have to be taken into consideration along with pedagogical methods and procedures (Mckernan, 2008; Grundy, 1987; Pennycook, 1998).

“What makes up the content of language learning?”

Due to the complex nature of language, Graves encourages language teachers to adopt a practical framework of conceptualizing language content based on Stern’s concepts. The framework is made up of three major categories: language, learning and learner, and social context. Below is a description of the three categories for conceptualizing the content adapted from Graves (2000).

The first category-focus on language- deals with the complex phenomenon of language that involves a variety of aspects such as linguistic skills, situations, topics, competencies, functions, tasks, speaking, reading, writing, listening, and genre (for further discussion see Graves, 2000).
The second category-focus on learning and learners-involves a. affective goals concerned with developing positive attitudes towards the target language and its culture, b. Interpersonal skills: are concerned with the skills that a learner should develop not only to promote learning but also to communicate with others in the classroom or outside the classroom, and c. Learning strategies that are concerned with how students learn. “They are the cognitive and metacognitive strategies we use to learn effectively and efficiently such as self-monitoring or developing strategies for remembering new vocabulary” (2000: 50). The aim behind these strategies is to help students develop learning at the classroom and beyond the classroom level (Grundy, 1987).

The third category-focus on Social Context deals with aspects that are beyond classroom activities at the micro level. It involves three areas, sociolinguistic skills, sociocultural skills, and sociopolitical skills. The sociolinguistic skills are “context dependent’. As such they involve selecting and using the appropriate linguistic expressions, skills, as well as the “extra linguistic behavior” that have to be learned alongside situations. (Graves, 2000; Grundy, 1987, Pennycook, 1999).The sociocultural skills, on the other hand focus on understanding certain cultural aspects of identity, values, beliefs, and traditions such as the concept of social class or the discrepancy between men and women. This understanding is important since it helps learners to “interpret …messages and behave and speak in a culturally appropriate way” (Graves, 2000: 51). The sociopolitical skills “involve learning to think critically and take actions for effective change in order to participate effectively in one’s community” (ibid).

Categorizing the language areas in such a framework is like a guide that gives the teacher choices on what to involve in a course. However, Graves says that this is not “a map of everything you should include in your course” because there may be other categories and skills to add (2000:53).
3.4.5 Materials Development

This section provides an overall discussion of materials development with the main focus on several aspects such as types of materials, the role of teachers in developing their pedagogical materials, and guidelines for developing materials. Hopefully, each of these aspects will be of value for teachers concerned with designing their courses.

Brown (1995: 139) defines the term materials as “any systematic description of the techniques and exercises to be used in classroom teaching”. Specifically, the term materials involves any pedagogical input such as textbooks, workbooks, and teacher’s guides in addition to any software and audio-visual materials, which represent an institution’s formal curriculum. The term ‘materials development’, on the other hand is defined as a process that comprises making decisions and options by teachers such as adaptation, modification, and reduction when selecting materials for a given subject (Tomlinson, 1998).

3.4.5.1 Types of Materials

Generally, materials concerned with ELT are of two types, authentic materials and created materials. Authentic materials refer to the use of materials that are not specifically selected for pedagogical purposes such as texts, video tapes, photographs, and the like (Richards, 2007; Peacock, 1997). On the contrary, created materials refer to the materials that are specifically designed for pedagogical purposes. Richards makes an important distinction between them in terms of advantages and disadvantages. Regarding authentic materials, he states that they have several advantages. First, they positively affect the learner motivation. Since they depend on web and media resources, this might be intrinsically more motivating than created materials. Second, “they provide authentic cultural information about the target culture” (2007: 253). Third, they present real language rather than the artificial texts as in created materials. Fourth, they are closely concerned with learners’
needs. However, using authentic materials as a creative approach for pedagogical purposes has been criticized for certain reasons such as providing difficult language as well as unneeded vocabulary for learners. In addition, they are “a burden for teachers” (253) since teachers have to spend more time looking for culturally and academically teachable materials. Since both approaches have advantages and limitations, some teachers and course designers use a mixture of authentic and created materials.

Created materials, on the other hand, are represented by textbooks, and teachers’ guides that are used in many language programs. Richards also provides a list of advantages and limitations of textbooks depending on the context of teaching and how they are used. The following is a list of the advantages of the created materials:

“They provide structure and a syllabus for a program. They help standardized instruction. They maintain quality. They provide a variety of learning resources. They are efficient. They can provide effective language models and input. They can train teachers. They are visually appealing.” (For further details see Richards, 2007: 245-255)

In spite of those advantages, created materials, and particularly, textbooks are subject to some criticisms. For example, the language they contain is artificial which is specially written for teaching purposes. They may also “distort content” (Richards, 2007: 255) in the sense that textbooks often don’t include controversial topics. Perhaps, the most serious issue is that since most textbooks are commercial, they may not reflect the students’ needs and interests. This might cause a burden on the teacher to adapt the textbook that satisfies the learners’ needs. Another problem is that “they deskill
teachers ...the teacher’s role can become reduced to that of a technician whose primary function is to present materials prepared by others” (ibid).

3.4.5.2 Guidelines and Factors for Developing Materials

Within the scope of TESOL, it is essential for teachers to know how to develop their materials successfully. Fortunately, the literature on curriculum offers certain criteria, described in terms of checklists and principles, to be followed while selecting or developing the created materials which constitute the basis of teaching in classroom. At a course level, Tomlinson (2003:21) presents a checklist of characteristics that good language teaching materials should have. Some of these characteristics are presented below:

“Materials should achieve impact.
Materials should help learners feel at ease.
Materials should help learners to develop confidence.
Materials should provide the learners with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes.
Materials should take into account that learners have different learning styles.
Materials should not rely too much on controlled practice.
Materials should provide opportunities for outcome feedback.”

However, Dudley-Evans and St. John (2004) state that it may not be practical for teachers to consider all those criteria while developing materials. Accordingly, teachers are recommended to select their materials on the basis of key principles. Among those principles are, a. whether the materials are motivating or not; b. to what extent the materials are aligning the learning objectives; and c. whether the materials support the learning process or not. Furthermore, Richards (2006) argues that the successful selection of materials mediates between theory of language (including the type of syllabus design) and contextual and situational considerations. Richards also argues that a teacher must not rely to a large extent on textbooks, and as such they
must have a role in the selection and evaluation of materials. This is because textbooks seldom meet the needs of a particular context. In this respect, he suggests the idea of textbook adaptation that is adjusting a textbook in accordance with the demands and characteristics of a textbook. Practically, adaptation of a textbook can be applied through a variety of procedures like “Modifying content...Adding or deleting content...Recognizing content...Modifying tasks....Extended tasks” (Richards, 2007: 260).

### 3.4.5.3 Teachers Role in Materials Development

Specialists in curriculum development emphasize the role of teachers in developing their own materials rather than solely relying on textbooks. For example, they encourage teachers to create their own materials or at least combine between textbooks and other sources of materials (McGrath, 2013, 2002; Block, 1991). Block (1991) is in favor of teachers developing their materials which as he considers is merely one part of teachers’ responsibilities. The teachers’ role in developing their own materials involves taking decisions such as adaptation, suitability, and selection. The idea of encouraging teachers to develop their own materials has several advantages. Block (1991) and Richards (2007) have provided considerable discussion about this subject. Below is a brief summary of some advantages.

**Contextualization**- Teachers’ decision of adaptation enables them to produce materials that are contextually suitable taking into consideration socio-cultural and political dimensions (Blok, 1991; Graves, 2000; Richards, 2007). Richards (2007: 261) refers to this advantage in terms of “relevance” where materials are directly relevant to students and institutional needs and that reflect local content, issues, and concerns”. Additionally, Block (1991: 216) stresses the purpose of reflection saying that “If we are to be reflective practitioners in the field of ELT, we need to consider all aspects of our teaching. I believe that preparing our own materials is one of these aspects”.
Students’ involvement- The new shift in English language pedagogy emphasizes the idea of involving students into the process of teaching and course design. In this respect, teacher’s adaptation will enable him to produce materials that are responsive to students’ needs and preferences. This will also help teachers avoid any the challenge of using courses that don’t fit students’ needs.

Avoiding challenges of textbooks-Some textbooks are produced for commercial and general purposes. In other words, they are not designed to serve specific purposes in a particular context. In this case, teachers’ role in developing their materials serves avoids the inappropriateness or unsuitability of textbooks.

Flexibility- Materials developed by teachers in a particular institution “can be easily revised or adapted as needed” (Richards, 2007: 261).

3.4.6 Formulating goals and objectives

In this section we will look first at some crucial issues regarding goals and objectives development, and then we will shed light on some models and guidelines that help for the formulation of those aspects.

Generally, the terms goals (or aims) and objectives are very crucial dimensions since they provide guidelines, focus, and description of learning purposes for both teachers and students (Richards, 2007; Graves, 2000; Brown, 1995; Dubin and Olishatin, 1987). However, the process of formulating goals and objectives in a way that actually helps students reach significant learning is not easy. In this respect, Graves (2000:73) states that “In practice, goals and objectives are one of the hardest aspects of course design for the teachers I have worked with, including myself”. Based on a study that was conducted by Clark and Peterson in this field, Graves ascribes the complexity to several factors. The first factor is due to teachers’ focus in classroom that is mostly on what and how to teach whereas aspects of planning that are not immediately tied to the classroom are not focused on.
Based on studies concerned with “teachers’ planning”, it has been shown that teachers are more concerned with the “concretes” of classroom such as students and other aspects of classroom situation than being concerned with unpredictable aspects like goals and objectives (Clark and Peterson cited in Graves, 2000: 73). The second factor relates to teachers’ lack of experience of formulating goals and objectives in a way that makes sense to them and students. The third factor, that is probably the most challenging one, is due to the idea of integration between goals and objectives and other aspects of a given course such as course content, materials, and students’ needs. The problem is that some teachers develop goals and objectives that don’t correspond to the content of a course and the aspect of assessment and evaluation.

Another critical issue in formulating goals and objectives is raised by Fink (2003) when he argues that some teachers only focus on the “understand and remember” kinds of learning ignoring or giving less attention to other aspects of significant learning. This might affect negatively the process of significant learning. In order to create balance in learning, teachers should take into account other kinds of learning such as “critical thinking, learning how to creatively use knowledge from the course, learning to solve real world ..., etc.” (Fink, 2003: 8). For this purpose, Fink has proposed a very useful taxonomy, based on Bloom’s et.al. Taxonomy, called “Taxonomy of Significant Learning” that involves six kinds of learning such as “foundational knowledge”, “application”, “integration”, “human dimensions”, “caring”, and “learning how to learn” (ibid).

However, reviewing the literature on goals and objectives we can notice that there are a number of frameworks and models that guide teachers and course developers to develop goals and objectives in a principled and coherent way. The following sections provide an overview of those models.
3.4.6.1 Goals Development

Goals are stated at the curriculum or the program level and their "statements reflect the ideology of the curriculum" (Richards, 2007: 120). Brown defines goals as "general statements concerning desirable and attainable program purposes and aims based on perceived language and situation needs" (1995: 71).

Reviewing the literature on curriculum, it can be noticed that developing goals is determined by a number of factors such as the learners' needs, the needs of society, as well as teachers and learners' beliefs (Richards, 2007; Graves, 2000; Dubin and Olishtain, 1987). This implies that there is no standard way in developing the content of goals statement for a given program or course. However, there are frameworks and models that can be followed and modified by course developers and teachers in accordance with the demands of the institution and the course. For this purpose, the literature provides three models that are specialized with organizing goals in language curriculum. Below is a brief description of three models of developing goals for learning EFL/ESL that might be helpful for teachers concerned with designing EAP courses.

The first model is called KASA that has been developed by the Department of Language Teacher Education at the School of International Training. According to this framework, goals are organized according to four criteria: Knowledge, Awareness, Skills, and Attitude. Knowledge goals focus on what students should know and understand about the language, culture and society. Awareness goals focus on what students should be aware of during language learning such as understanding how language works and how others use it. These involve being aware of the nonlinguistic strategies that students should use for the purpose of communication. Skills goals constitute the broadest category since it involves the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. They focus on what students need to use the language fluently and accurately. Attitude goals focus on the affective dimension of the students such as the students' attitude towards the
language and its culture and the learning situation including the teacher and group.

A similar model of goals development has been proposed by Stern (1992). Stern has presented four categories: **Proficiency, Cognitive, Affective, and Transfer**. Proficiency goals focus on the students’ mastery of language and what they will be able to do with it. Cognitive goals focus on the knowledge that the students will gain concerning the language and its culture. Affective goals are concerned with having positive attitudes towards the language and the surrounding circumstances. Transfer goals are concerned with transferring what the students learn in the classroom into outside the classroom.

A third model of goals organization is proposed by Genesee and Upshur (cited in Graves, 2000: 85). The framework involves Language goals, Strategic goals, Socio-affective goals, Philosophical goals, and Method or process goals as stated below.

"**Language goals**: language skills the learners are expected to acquire in the classroom

**Strategic goals**: strategies the learners use to learn the language

**Socio-affective goals**: changes in learners’ attitudes or social behaviors that result from classroom instruction

**Philosophical goals**: changes in values, attitudes, and beliefs of a more general nature

**Method or process goals**: the activities learners will be engaged in."

In addition to the ideas of categorizing goals based on the models above, teachers need to know about the techniques of goals formulation. For this purpose, Richards (2007) provides a practical discussion of goals and objectives formulations including guidelines and techniques (For further details see Richards, 2007 and Brown, 1995)
3.4.6.2 Objectives Development

In comparison to goals, Objectives are defined as “specific statements that describe the particular knowledge, behaviors, and/or skills that the learner will be expected to know or perform at the end of a course or program” (Brown, 1995: 73). Similarly, Graves defines objectives as “statements about how the goals will be achieved” (2000: 76). Practically, objective development involves breaking down a goal into “learnable and teachable units” (ibid).

Richards (2007) provides very practical guidelines for teachers who are interested in formulating the learning objectives for an EFL course supported by many examples. For the purpose of illustration, I have selected two guidelines with examples adapted from Richards.

First, objective statements must involve certain issues such as a. describing in terms of smaller units what the aim tries to achieve; b. providing the basic teaching activities; and c. describing the process of learning in terms of "observable behavior and performance" (2007: 123). The example below shows the statement of objectives in relation to the aim:

**Aim**

- “Students will learn how to understand lectures in English.

**Objectives**

- Students will be able to follow an argument, theme, or thesis of a lecture.
- Students will learn how to recognize the following aspects of a lecture:
  
  Cause-and-effect relationships
  Comparisons and contrasts
  Premises used in persuasive arguments
  Supporting details used in persuasive arguments”

Second, formulating objectives must be done in accordance with certain criteria such as the ones below.
1. “Objectives describe a learning outcome
2. Objectives should be consistent with the curriculum aim.
3. Objectives should be precise.
4. Objectives should be feasible.”

Overall, goals and objectives are two related elements of course design in the sense that the latter depends on the former but not vice versa. However, teachers who are involved in course design need to take into consideration that the process involves some criteria and techniques when formulating goals and objectives for a particular course.

3.4.7 Designing an Assessment Plan

Within all domains of education, the notion of assessment plays an important role in course design. According to Graves (2000:207) assessment plan has three interrelated roles in course design: “assessing needs”, “assessing students’ learning”, and “assessing or evaluating a course”. With regard to assessing needs, it has been discussed in section 3.4.3 in this chapter. Therefore, the main focus in this section is on students learning assessment as it is within the stage of course design.

Students’ Learning Assessment

For the purpose of assessing students’ learning, Graves (2000: 210) provides a framework that is built up of a set of questions as the ones below:

“Who assesses students’ learning?
What is assessed?
Why assesses students’ learning?
How can you assess students’ learning?
When can you assess students’ learning?
What is done with the results of assessment?”
For the purpose of having sufficient information about the criteria of assessment, Graves endorses the idea of Baily. In what follows is an overview of Graves’s answers to each of these questions for the purpose of building up a picture of designing an assessment plan as an important component of course design. With regard to “who assesses students’ learning?” Graves states that usually the teacher, the institution, and the students. However, the important questions are the second, third, and fourth ones.

In an answer to the second question “What is assessed?” Graves states that what is assessed depends on general and specific criteria. The general criteria are concerned with the way of conceptualizing the course content in accordance with its goals and objectives. For example, if the objective of a speaking and listening course focuses on students’ ability to speak and listen in real situations, then the assessment plan must involve ways of assessing students’ ability regarding this aspect.

The specific criteria, on the other hand involve assessing students in relation to specific activities or knowledge that have been taught. The notion of specific criteria is considered as the basis on which students are assessed. In this respect, Graves points out that “A critical role in the assessment process is deciding which criteria to use” (in Graves: 2000: 210). For example, if a teacher has a goal “Students will be able to give effective business presentations” and wants to assess his students’ ability in giving effective presentation, he needs to think of criteria concerning what is meant by “effective” (2000: 211).

Overall, deciding what is to be assessed needs from a teacher first to build up the foundation of a course. The foundation can be built up by preparing three essential aspects: conceptualizing the content, developing the goals and objectives, and developing the syllabus of a course. Having built the foundation of a course, the second step is to develop specific criteria for assessment. Thus, the foundation plays a crucial role in deciding what to be
assessed. It will also help a teacher “to make decisions about which skills and topics will be addressed and therefore can be assessed” (Graves, 2000i:211).


Regarding the fourth question “How do you assess students’ learning?” Graves states that there are a variety of ways. Generally, students’ learning can be assessed by observation or by a comprehensive assessment plan including a variety of assessment activities or tools that are designed for the purposes mentioned above. The assessment activities can take various forms such as “Tests, authentic tasks, portfolios, role plays, written assignment, student-made tests, student-developed rubrics or standards, and peer evaluations” (2000: 213).

In response to the fifth question “When can you assess students’ learning?” Graves states that the assessment plan can take place any time. However, “it depends on the context taking into account issues such as the length of the course, the construction of the course units, and the time a teacher has to assign grades.

Concerning the question “What is done with the results of the assessment?” Graves says that diagnosing assessment is helpful for the teacher and students. According to the teacher, assessing students’ proficiency or achievement, for example, helps him in shaping the materials or goals and objectives in accordance with students’ needs. If the results of the assessment show they are not doing well, then the teacher needs to reconsider the development of goals and objectives, materials, and syllabus. For the students, assessing achievement and progress helps them to “get a sense of what they have learned” (2000: 213).
3.5 Research Studies on Course design

This section reviews several studies that have been selected on the basis of their relevance to my research. Since my study deals with addressing the role of teachers in course design, the section will be divided into two sub sections. The first section reviews several studies concerned with addressing the role of teachers at the level of curriculum development. The second section, on the other hand reviews several studies concerned with the teacher role at the level of single components of course design.

3.5.1 Teacher Role at the level of Curriculum Development

In this section I will review five studies that support the need for teacher involvement in curriculum development. Overall, these studies explored considerable issues relating to the role of teacher involvement in curriculum development such as the teacher’s perception, voice, contextual knowledge, and professional development that are expected to impact the process of curriculum development.

In order to understand teachers’ perceptions about curriculum development and curriculum change in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Alwan (2006) carried out a qualitative study employing semi structured interviews with a number of teachers of a secondary school for collecting data. Data analysis revealed several findings in relation to several research questions. However, I will review only the findings concerned with the role of teachers in curriculum development. One of the major findings in this respect is that teachers view curriculum from a narrow perspective as a matter of delivery of materials, and curriculum change is materials change. In other words, teachers believe that “curriculum is the book” (2006:108). Data also revealed that teachers don’t have an active role in the first phase of curriculum development -curriculum design. However, their role is restricted to teaching the prescribed textbook-curriculum implementation. The researcher interpreted this from psychological perspectives reporting that lack of teacher involvement in
curriculum development has reflected negatively on their feelings and attitudes. In this respect, one finding showed that teachers appear to have “low self-concept…and appear to be powerless” (2006:130). In addition, it affected teachers’ motivation for updating their materials and teaching in accordance with students’ needs. This study provides evidence to the literature emphasizing the significance of the teacher role in curriculum development. Furthermore, this study might be distinguishable in its focus on the psychological aspect of the teacher that has not been considerably addressed in the literature whose main focus is on teacher role from the perspectives of professionalism and pedagogy.

A similar study was conducted by Uztosun and Troudi (2015) but with a different sample and different context. The sample was a group of college teachers in a tertiary context in Turkey. Using qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection, the researchers explored the participants’ perceptions of the issue of curriculum change in English language teaching departments in Turkish universities. Among the findings of study is the one that is concerned with teacher involvement in the process of curriculum change. Participants reported that they were not involved in the process of curriculum change reporting that they had “lack of voice” (2015:24). Furthermore, they expressed their dissatisfaction with the “top-down” curriculum development on the basis that it is prepared by people who are not contextually experienced. As was interpreted by the researchers, the lack of teacher involvement in this context had negatively affected teachers’ feelings and attitudes towards curriculum change. Based on this finding, the researchers interpreted that lack of teacher involvement is considered as a limitation to curriculum change including implementation of courses and the quality of ELT. With this finding, the study provides another support to the literature stressing the importance of teacher role in curriculum development.

Like the case of Alwan’s (2006) and Uztosun and Troudi’s (2015) studies, Carl (2005) reported teachers’ perceptions about their low participation in curriculum design and its effects on the effectiveness of curriculum
development. The data were collected by a survey using quantitative and qualitative methods. Overall, the findings reflected teachers’ strong desire in participating in curriculum design outside classroom rather than being mere “recipients” (2005:228) who have to implement curriculum inside the classroom. Further findings explored their belief that participation in the first phase-curriculum design enables them to contribute creatively in the second phase- curriculum implementation. The participants also believe that policy makers and curriculum agents don’t have direct contact with the classroom like teachers, and as such they cannot contribute successfully to designing courses based on learner needs. Accordingly, the researcher argues that “By ignoring the teacher’s voice, the outcomes of new thinking on curriculum development may...be thwarted, prolonging the dangerous situation that teachers, as potential curriculum agents, simply remain “voices crying in the wilderness” (2005: 228).

Abudu (2015) conducted a quantitative study that in terms of its focus on teachers’ involvement in curriculum development is similar to the studies above, but with further focus on their perception about the barriers to their involvement in the process. The data were collected from 130 teachers from four secondary schools in Ghana by means of a questionnaire. The results of study indicated that the participants were willing to take part in curriculum design as they believe that their involvement in curriculum design contributes to the efficiency of their implementation of curriculum inside the classroom. However, there were barriers that hindered their participation in curriculum design including “huge workload, lack of expertise, inadequate funding, and lack of availability of information” (2015: 59). The finding of barriers raises a crucial issue regarding the decision of teachers’ involvement and the extent of their involvement in curriculum design. It implies that teachers’ involvement in curriculum design is determined by some barriers such as the ones mentioned above, and as such the limitation to the extent of their involvement needs to be considered.
Sharkey (2004) carried out a qualitative case study with the same focus-investigating teacher role. However, in Sharkey’s study, the teachers of a primary school in Millville in the USA were involved in curriculum development. The data were collected from multi methods-field notes, interviews, and transcriptions of two curriculum workshops. In this context, teachers’ conceptual knowledge plays an important role in shaping their interpretation of curriculum development and making decisions. Findings of the study emphasized the importance of teachers’ knowledge and showed how it served as “a critical mediator in three ways- establishing trust, defining project needs, and critiquing political factors” (2004:288). Based on teachers’ perception and their contextual knowledge, the researcher concluded that familiarity with contextual knowledge is not enough unless it is integrated with teachers’ practice and taking actions as the case of teachers in this context. Sharkey’s argument supports the literature view concerned with the importance of problematizing the situation as a crucial part of teachers’ contextual knowledge.

3.5.2 Teacher Role in Designing Single Aspects of Course Design

Research on curriculum development doesn’t show studies that are directly concerned with investigating the teacher’s role in designing EFL/EAP course design as a whole process. However, there is research on addressing single components of course design, particularly in relation to syllabus design, material development, and students’ needs. This section reviews three studies concerned with addressing teacher’s role in relation to these components of course design.

At the level of syllabus design, Al Issa (2007) conducted a qualitative study in which he argues for the importance of teacher role in managing the mandated textbooks by the Ministry of Education in Oman. His argument is based on the reason that the syllabus design in these textbooks doesn’t promote students’ communication in English in response to the life of modernization and technology that Oman as a developing country is looking for.
Accordingly, he involved a group of agents concerned with ELT in Oman: “GSC student, inspectors, teachers, school heads, student teacher and SQU tutors” into his study (GSC refers to Graduate Students Council and SQU refers to Sultan Qaboos University) (2007: 202). The purpose of his study was to understand the participants’ perceptions regarding the issue of teacher role and the type of syllabus as two important aspects in curriculum design. Triangulation of methods was used to collect data by interviews, pertinent literature, and policy text and National English Language Policy (NELP) plan.

The results of Al Issa’s study indicate that there has been a general agreement among the participants that teachers must have an active role in syllabus design by making decisions and participating in positive curriculum change in response to students’ needs. Also, there has been an agreement that materials must be developed in accordance with the communicative approach in order to improve students’ communicative abilities and teachers must have a role in this respect. The researcher concludes that it is necessary for teachers to be professionally developed in order to tackle problems of curriculum development. This study highlights the role of teacher professionalism as an important factor that helps teachers make the right decisions for shaping syllabus design.

In an attempt to investigate the role of teachers in material development, Albedaiwi (2011) conducted a qualitative study in which he investigated the way and level the EFL teachers manage the prescribed textbook by the Ministry of Education in public schools in Saudi Arabia. Methods of classroom observation and semi structured interviews were employed for collecting data from nine EFL teachers in a public secondary school. Results of study revealed teachers’ willingness in having an active role in shaping and managing material development at the level of course implementation and their perception of the need to adapt the prescribed textbook in response to their students’ needs. However, the level of managing the prescribed textbook was determined by the level of teachers’ professional autonomy. Based on classroom observation, the researcher interpreted that the teachers
who are more professional exercise greater autonomy in managing the prescribed material than teachers who are inexperienced and less professional. Like Issa’s study, this study claims that teacher’s role and professional autonomy are required in managing institutional constraints and implementation gaps regarding material development.

With regard to students’ needs, Davis (2006) reported a study she has carried out in her class at the university level in Japan in which she argues that there must be an extent to teachers’ involvement in making decisions regarding this aspect. She suggests that in order to collect information about students’ needs for a particular course, it is advisable to involve students in the process via designing “a class-specific questionnaire survey” (2006: 4). The rationale behind this procedure is to give students the opportunity to express their views about the course. The second rationale is to avoid teachers’ bias or personal intuitions that might cause misinterpretation of students’ needs when making decisions regarding this aspect. It is expected that the ‘class-specific questionnaire’ helps collect more reliable and relevant information reflecting students’ expectations, preferences, and needs. For this purpose, Davis conducted a quantitative study using a survey questionnaire method for collecting students' responses regarding every aspect of course design. The sample of this study was a group of the researcher’s students.

Analysis of students' responses and comments on the survey questionnaires showed several conclusions. One of the major conclusions is that students appreciated the idea of having been given a voice in shaping their course development with the focus on three aspects of course development materials development, selection of content, and methodology. For example, students prefer not to rely on the textbook for material development and to select a content that helps them express their meanings through communicative tasks and activities. Based on this finding, the teacher decided to be more open and responsive to her students’ needs. Furthermore, the teacher pointed out that she benefited from students’
responses and used them for formulation of criteria for shaping her current and future courses.

It has been shown from all studies reviewed this section that teacher involvement in curriculum development is an important factor that has attracted the attention of many researchers. However, I have noticed that there is no study; neither internationally nor in the Arab World in which teachers were involved in course design as a whole process. Hopefully, my study will fill in this gap and suggest relevant issues for further research.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the design of the current research. It involves five major sections in addition to three sections relating to issues concerned with the process of research design. The first section presents the research questions in connection with the goals of research. The second section justifies the rational for adopting the qualitative approach for this study supported by certain philosophical and methodological assumptions. The third section is concerned with the methodology of the research focusing on the reasons for choosing the case study as the most appropriate strategy for the study. The fourth section provides a detailed description of the different methods utilized for collecting data and procedures of sampling. The fifth section outlines the methods of data analysis. The chapter, finally, deals with issues of trustworthiness, ethics considerations, and limitations of study that are presented in sections 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8 respectively.

4.1 Purpose and Research Questions

This study intends to contribute to knowledge and research through a qualitative investigation into the process of designing EAP courses by teachers. It aims at:

a. approaching a thorough understanding of how teachers and students perceive the course design process as course developers and users, respectively;

b. uncovering any issues and factors that impact the process of design, according to teachers, and the process of learning according to students; and
c. gaining suggestions from teachers and students regarding the improvement of course design.

According to those purposes, the study is based on five main questions that provide the framework of the whole research design. All questions are exploratory in nature, and each one intends to highlight some particular goals that the researcher endeavors to explore and understand (Appendix 3 includes a list of each question with the purposes it aims to explore). The questions that the study draws upon are listed below.

Q.1 How do teachers at a tertiary institution in Oman design their EAP courses?

Q.2 What factors have the most impact on designing courses at the tertiary level from the perspectives of teachers?

Q.3 How do students perceive the courses designed by their teachers?

Q.4 What challenges do students face in relation to course design?

Q.5 What are the suggestions by teachers and students for the improvement of course design?

4.2 The Rational for Choosing a Qualitative Approach

When conducting a particular research study, it is essential for the researcher to determine which methodological paradigm to stand on. Generally, in social sciences there are two common paradigms, positivism and interpretivism (Cohen, et.al. 2000) that are distinguished from each other in terms of philosophy, ontology, and epistemology. These elements in turn determine whether knowledge can be approached quantitatively or qualitatively or both depending on whether the research stands on the positivist or interpretivist paradigm, respectively.
The current study falls into the category of qualitative research underlined by the paradigm of interpretivism. Why I have adopted the qualitative approach is due to several reasons concerned with the goal of research, the questions it seeks to answer, and research design including methodology and methods of collecting data and sampling. In addition, it draws on the philosophy of the interpretive paradigm. The argument that follows will show the philosophical assumption that justifies the reason for the adoption of the qualitative tradition (the methodological assumptions will be stated in section 4.3).

Philosophically, the qualitative research draws on two interrelated paradigms, constructivism and interpretivism (Flick, 2014; Shank and Brown, 2007; Creswell, 2007; 2003; Cohen et al., 2000; Lincoln and Cuba, 1985; 2004; Crotty, 1998; Merriam, 1998; 2002). The paradigm of constructivism is based on the tenet that “reality is socially constructed, so the focus of research should be on an understanding of this construction and the multiple perspectives it implies” (Richards, 2003: 38). The paradigm of interpretivism is complementary to the one of constructivism in that it is concerned with understanding the meanings generated from participants’ lived experiences. The lived experiences, then lead to developing meanings that in turn can be interpreted subjectively or qualitatively by individuals who are involved in real situations in order to come up with inquiries or knowledge. (Flick, 2014; Creswell, 2007; 2003, 1998; Dornyei, 2011; Punch, 2009; Richards, 2003; Crotty, 1998).

The study under investigation draws on the belief that “teachers are the best people to design the courses they teach” (Graves, 2000: 5). Graves’s perspective draws on the argument that being familiar with the context, including its socio-cultural and political dimensions, in addition to knowing students’ linguistic and cognitive abilities enable teachers to design their courses effectively. In my professional context, teachers have the privilege of designing the courses they teach based on their teaching and contextual experiences. The aim of the research, therefore, is to benefit from their lived experiences and perspectives about the issue of designing courses and its
surrounding factors. Students are also involved as course consumers, and so their experiences are of value. Thus, based on the interpretive assumption that “reality is a human construct” (Wellington, 2004: 16) teachers and students’ involvement into this research helps the researcher to construct knowledge in order to understand and generate a complexity of views and beliefs about the process of course design.

4.3 Research Methodology: The Selection of Case Study

In conjunction with the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm underpinning this study, the case study has been chosen as a research strategy for the purpose of providing “a framework for data collection and analysis”(Bryman and Bell, 2007:40). Depending on epistemological and methodological considerations, the purpose, and questions of study, the case study has been selected as the most appropriate strategy for this study. Through the following discussion, I will identify the rationale for case study as a choice of my research strategy.

Epistemologically speaking, it has been previously stated that this study draws on the philosophy of constructivist-interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm assumes that the researcher should employ the epistemology of interpretivism when investigating a particular issue in a particular context from the perspectives of the involved participants in order to construct a holistic view of the investigated phenomenon. Thus, the case study which is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context” (Yin, 2003: 13) can be employed as a useful tool by means of which a researcher can research a case or “bounded system” (Cresswell, 2007:93).This assumption applies to the current research that seeks to investigate a particular phenomenon that is designing EAP courses by teachers who belong to a particular tertiary context in Oman. The setting of my case study is an institution that belongs to the higher education in Oman,
and therefore “the case study is a powerful means to understand institutions of higher education as socially constructed organizations” (Brown, 2008:2).

The principle goal of this research is to explore teachers and students’ perspectives and beliefs regarding the issue of course design and the meanings they attach to. My intention behind that is to provide rich insights and develop multiple interpretations, patterns as an ontological stance (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Smith, 2003). For this I need to gather detailed and thick information from the participants about my case (Yin, 2009; Stake, 1995, 2005; Merriam, 1988). To achieve this purpose, Dornyi (2011: 155) states that:

The case study is an excellent method for obtaining a thick description of a complex social issue embedded within a cultural context. It offers rich and in-depth insights that no other method can yield, allowing researchers to examine how an intrinsic set of circumstances come together and interact in shaping the social world around us...

Having taken the goals into consideration, the current study is based on five exploratory research questions that are of ‘how?’ and ‘what?’ types. In this regard, Yin (2005; 2009) recommends that case studies are useful for responding to such types of questions that are descriptive and exploratory in nature. For this, he points out that:

the distinctive topics for applying the case study method arise from at least two situations. First and most important…the case study method is pertinent when your research addresses either a descriptive question (what happened?) or an exploratory question (how or why did something happen?)

(Yin, 2005: 381)

Methodologically, the case study research is helpful because it admits "multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (Yin, 2003a) such as interviews, observations, and
document archives. This is also applicable to my research design that combines multi methods for collecting data (see the section on methods of collecting data 4.4). Ideally, collecting data from multiple sources helps a researcher to maximize his or her understanding of the researched phenomenon (Dornyei, 2011; Punch, 2009; Stake, 2000; 2005). In turn, gaining a full understanding of the phenomenon contributes to the coverage of the data analysis that later will strengthen the discussion of the findings and implications of study.

The third consideration that encourages the choice of the case study strategy is associating with the nature of the field of TESOL where this study is located in. The core of this field is language and its teaching and learning that are always subject to various influential factors and trends that are institutional, cultural, social, cognitive, and political (McKernan, 2008; Pennycook, 1999; 2001, Canagarajah, 1999; Apple, 1990; Freeman and Johnson, 1998; Grundy, 1987). This implies that we deal with a phenomenon that has its own particularity which makes addressing any of its aspects different from context to context. Chapelle and Duff (2003: 164) argue that:

More recently, TESOL case studies have adopted the most subjective and interpretive stance typical of case studies in education …with more emphasis on such issues as learners’ and teachers’ identities, skills development and its consequences for learners, teachers’ professional development experiences, and the implementation of language policies in programs and countries.

4.4 Methods of sampling and data collection

Having settled on the qualitative approach and the strategy of the case study, it is essential to determine the methods of sampling and data collection. This section is therefore, devoted to introduce the methods of sampling and data collection of this study. The first section introduces the typology and methods of sampling selected for this study. The second section is concerned with discussing the three sources of data collection- the interview, focus group
discussion, and document analysis- from qualitative perspectives. Table 4.1 provides an overall picture of the sources of data collection involving the methods of data collection, the sample, and the addressed research question.

Table 4.1: Sources of Sampling and Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research tool</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Research Question addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher interview</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Q.1 How do teachers at a tertiary institution design EAP courses?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q.3 What factors have the major impact on designing courses at the college level from the perspectives of teachers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q.5. What are the suggestions by teachers and students for the improvement of course design?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student focus group</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Q.2 How do students perceive the courses designed by their teachers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q.4 What challenges do students face in relation to course design?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q.5 What are the suggestions by teachers and students for the improvement of course design?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>Q.1 How do teachers at a tertiary institution design EAP courses?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.1 Sampling

Among the basic elements of research design is the selection of sampling. Since this research is qualitative, the sampling must be purposeful (Dornyei,
Purposeful sampling means selecting "individuals and sites because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007: 125). The purposeful sampling in this research is represented by two groups: teachers and students belonging to a particular context within the field of TESOL, department of English at a tertiary institution in Oman.

This selection of sampling is based on certain considerations within the scope of qualitative research. The first consideration relates to gaining rich data from the sample. Dornyei (2011: 126) confirms this when he states that purposeful sampling helps "provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation so as to maximize what we can learn". This applies to the purpose of this research that aims at understanding and exploring any issues relating to the process of designing courses by teachers. This has encouraged me to choose a group of teachers and four groups of students as a purposeful sample from which “the best can be learned” (Merriam, 2002: 12).

**Teacher Sample**

In light of the criteria and characteristics stated earlier, the sample of teachers had been purposefully selected to answer questions One, Three, and Five of this study (see table 4.1).

The sample of teachers involves nine teachers who teach a variety of EAP courses at the undergraduate level. Six of the participants are males while three are females. All teachers are non-Omanis- six are Arabs (from different nationalities), one is Indian, and two are Americans as indicated in Table 4.2 below. In spite of the differences in terms of gender and nationalities, the sample is homogeneous in the sense that all teachers had been selected from the same population- teachers working in the same context.
Most of the participants have a minimum of five year experience in TESOL, particularly in teaching and designing (or redesigning) and implementing their courses. Having good experience in this area indicates that they can reflect on their perspectives and beliefs. The advantage of selecting experienced individuals will in turn support the goal of providing highly comprehensive and meaningful findings (Dornyei, 2011; Punch, 2008; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; 1994). In addition, gaining different experiences which Polkinghorne (2005:140) calls "triangulation on experience" helps the researcher to move beyond a single view of the experience. The use of multiple participants serves to deepen the understanding of the investigated experience” (Polkinghorne, 2005: 140)

In terms of the criteria of feasibility (Miles and Huberman, 1994), all qualitative approaches, require from the researcher to develop close relationships with research participants and sites (Devers and Frankel, 2000). Fortunately, all participants are my colleagues at work. This has solved the issue of accessing them easily in terms of time and place. Furthermore, they expressed great willingness to help me accomplish my research perfectly.

Table: 4.2: Information about Teacher Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher participant</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>15</td>
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Student Sample

The sample of students involves four groups of students. Two groups (General English Group and Grammar Group) included five students, while the other two groups (Study Skills Group and Writing Group) included four students. The sample has been purposefully selected to address questions Three, Four, and Five of the study. The sample has the potential to provide rich information for these questions due to their live experiences in the studied phenomenon-course design (Creswell, 2007; Silverman, 1985). Practically, the selection had been done according to two considerations, their academic level and GPA (Grade Point Average).

According to the academic level, I selected students from semesters four, five, six, seven, and eight (intermediate and advanced semesters). The selection is based on several reasons. First, the students at these levels have studied a variety of EFL/EAP courses, and as such they are supposed to be familiar with many EFL/EAP courses. Among these courses are the four courses: General English, Essay Writing, Introduction to Modern Grammar, and Study skills that have been chosen for collecting data from students. Second, having experiences with many courses, enables the students to identify the problems associating with designing courses by teachers and reflect on their experiences and perspectives in a critical way. Third, the students can compare and analyze the course in terms of its components such as goals, content, syllabuses, materials, methodology, and criteria of assessments.

The second consideration for the choice of students sample is related to their GPA. I chose the students with a variety of GPA, that is good, average, and week students. The rational for collecting data from various levels of students is to gain multiple understandings of how individual differences among students affect their perceptions and views regarding the investigated phenomenon.
4.4.2 Methods of data collection

Based on epistemological and philosophical considerations of interpretivism (discussed in section 4.2 in this chapter), qualitative research relies on a variety of methods (Dornyei, 2011; Creswell, 2007; Weinberg, 2001; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Merriam, 2002, Smith, 2003; Mason, 2002) that are “interactive and humanistic” (Creswell, 2003: 181).

In my research, I am seeking to utilize a mixture of sources for collecting data focusing on semi-structured interviews, analysis of documents, and focus group discussions. Rationally, the diversity of methods serves to “answer different kinds of research questions and make use of different analytic tools” (Lyons, 2015: 74). Utilizing these methods will result in a form of qualitative data called “language data” or “discourse data” that are composed of “interrelated words combined into sentences and sentences combined into discourse” (Polkinghorne, 2005: 138).

4.4.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The primary source of data collection in this research is the one of interviews. Relying on interviews as the primary source for collecting data is justified by several persuasive reasons. First, the purpose of this study is to understand how the process of course design is viewed and evaluated from the perspectives of the concerned participants, teachers and students. In this regard, interviewing is a good tool for "studying people’s understanding of the meaning in their lived work" (Kvale, 1996: 105). Second, the study is also concerned with exploring any issues relevant to the process of course design, and as such interviewing helps to find out from participants "things we cannot observe"(Patton, 1987: 196). Third, interviewing individuals helps to gain thick description of the studied topic (Kvale, 2006; Merriam, 2002; Lincoln and Denzin, 1994) which is one of goals of this research. Fourth, this study deals with the phenomenon of designing EAP course design in the field of TESOL.
within which we are dealing with events and matters that can be explored by understanding directly from the participants what and how they deal with them (Richards, 2003).

The type of interview utilized in this study is the semi-structured interview that depends on open-ended questions with "considerable flexibility over the range and the order of questions within a loosely defined framework" (Parsons in Wellington, 2003: 74). However, the semi-structured interview should follow a professional protocol (Agee, 2009; Kvale, 2006; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; 1996; Dornyei, 2011, Duff, 200; Richards, 2003; Briggs, 1986). The protocol of the interview entails following two stages and techniques to achieve good quality of interview. The sections that follow will provide a detailed description of the protocol that I followed.

**Stage one: Preparing for the interview**- Preparing for the interview is the preliminary stage that involves two steps: "thematizing" and "designing" (Dorny, 2011). The thematizing step involves integrating the research questions, objectives of study and theoretical views. I have applied this procedure when I made use of all the themes and categories appeared in the literature review on my topic. Going through the literature on language course design, I have noticed that the whole process is described in terms of two major categories: components of course design and methods of organizing components (Graves, 2000; 1996; Richards, 2007; Brown, 1995). The components involve categories such as goals, syllabus design, conceptualizing the content, learners’ needs, and assessment criteria (Graves, 2000; 1996). Each of these components formed a category by being integrated with the general purpose of study-understanding teachers’ beliefs-in relation to the focus of the three research questions concerned with teacher data as in Figure 4. For example, I formed a question about teachers’ beliefs-within the focus of Question One- regarding developing goals and objectives- as a major component of course design and the same was done with the other components and aspects of course design.
The second step involves designing the interview questions in a form of a question format or framework called ‘the interview guide’ (Wellington, 2003; Dornyei, 2011). The interview guide is made up of “a classified list of topics—the issues or broad research questions which the researcher intends to explore” (Wellington: 76). The questions are of open-ended type. The nature of open-ended questions is helpful in encouraging “the interviewee to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner” within an atmosphere of guidance and direction provided by the interviewer. (Dornyei: 136). In accordance to this, I have followed the same procedure and designed an interview guide in two versions. One version is designed for the sample of teachers and the other for the sample of students. Both versions
include a number of questions that are organized according to the major research questions (For further details see Appendix 4 and 5).

**Stage Two: setting up the interview** - Setting up the interview is the second stage of the interview process that entails meeting the participants under suitable conditions. During this stage I followed certain procedures within the protocol of semi-structured interviews, as stated below:

- Providing relaxing atmosphere
- Being familiar with the topic, theoretically and practically
- Using the interview guide
- Recoding the interview
- Avoiding prompting questions

First, I endeavored to provide relaxing atmosphere and put the interviewee at ease via explaining the topic and the purpose of the research and also confirming the value of his/her contribution to our field of TESOL. Second, I had to be quite familiar with the key concepts of the topic and the area it belongs to (Cohen et al, 2000). For this purpose, I had to look through the literature review chapter in order to be familiar with concepts and aspects of the studied subject. Third, I took into account the protocol of semi-structured interviews. This was done through opening the interview with some probe questions like the questions below:

- How long have you been teaching in this context?
- In this context we design the courses we teach, that is we don’t adopt courses that have been designed by others. Do you prefer this idea? Or do you prefer the idea of having courses designed by others?

After opening the interview, I used the interview guide by asking the open ended questions or content questions (Dornyei, 2011) that have been designed for this purpose. Each participant was asked the same questions selected from the interview guide.
Four, as any qualitative researcher seeking for reflecting on the participants’ beliefs and views, I had to manage a good situation for every interview taking into consideration the conditions and procedures stated above before and during the interview. I meet each participant individually and face to face in a quiet place at the college- my office. The interview lasted from one hour to two hours with short breaks. Every interview was recorded by digital voice recorder. I also took notes in my notebook immediately after the end of interview, particularly notes about the body language and whether the interviewee was interested or not (Cohen et al., 2000).

4.4.2.2 Focus Group Discussion

The second tool for gathering my qualitative data is the focus group discussion. It is considered as a kind of face to face interview in which the main concern is to share with the participants who belong to the same program or organization their own views and experiences on a particular topic. (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990; Ritchie and Lewes, 2003).

In order to address the third, fourth, and fifth questions of this study a number of students have participated as a second purposeful sample. For this sample, I decided to use the method of focus group. The selection of this method for the student sample draws on certain qualitative perspectives. First, it provides a natural atmosphere for discussing a particular topic (Bloor et al, 2001; Kreuger and Casey, 2000). Such a natural atmosphere stimulates the participants, particularly the less confident ones, to feel free in reflecting on their views, ideas, and motives. The group discussions encourage the students "to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group" (Morgan in Punch: 147). The second advantage is that through the focus group discussion, a large amount of information can be generated within one session.
Four groups of students participated in the group discussions. Each group involves four or five students with different grades (GPA) high, intermediate, and weak and different academic levels (bachelor and diploma).

The courses that had been addressed were Essay Writing, General English, Modern Grammar, and Study skills. Those are the basic EAP courses that our English Department is offering (in addition to some others). Accordingly, four groups were selected; each group is concerned with one course. The rational for selecting several groups instead of focusing on one group is to involve a good number of students into the discussion for trustworthiness purposes.

I had prepared a second interview guide that was designed in terms of the research questions and interview questions. For each research question, a list of open-ended questions had been prepared (Appendix 5). The questions have been developed in accordance with the aims of the three questions of the research study concerned with student data: Questions Three, Four, and Five (details of each question and its aims are stated in section 4.1 in this chapter). For example, the principle aim of Question Three is to understand students’ perspectives regarding the design of a particular course, therefore, a list of questions have been prepared to investigate their perspectives regarding the aspects concerned with course design. Another list of questions has been also prepared to find out students’ challenges within Question Four and so on with Question Five.

4.4.2.3 Document Analysis

In this research, documentation is used as a primary source of collecting data since “documents…are a rich source of data for education and social research” (Punch, 2009: 158). The selection of documentation as a primary source is related to the process of course design. In my professional context, the process of designing EAP courses initially begins with preparing a plan in a form of template for each course. This is considered as a preliminary stage
of course design. The plan involves a description of the basic elements of a particular course, in addition to a brief description of the methodology and criteria of assessment. Moreover, this format is considered as a formal document that "reflects the policy or philosophy of a particular institute" (Punch, 2009: 158). Appendix (6) illustrates some samples of course description plan. I have selected the plan of course description of four courses: Introduction to Modern Grammar, General English, Essay Writing, and Study skills in accordance with the courses selected for the focus group discussions. I have selected these courses since all student participants both the bachelor and diploma studied them previously. It is worth remarking that these plans are prepared by the teacher participants in this study.

Epistemologically, documentation can serve as an exploratory tool. Punch (2009: 114) emphasizes the role of documents when he states that they “can be used to open up an area of inquiry and sensitize researchers to the key issues and problems in that field”. Therefore, the selection of documentary data contributes to particularly addressing Question one ‘How do teachers at a tertiary institution design EAP courses?’ and the goals of study. This provides good evidence of how is the course designed? Who designs it? Who studies it? What are the components of a course? What are the criteria used for designing the components? Answering these questions will contribute to providing a rich insight for interpretations and implications based on data analysis.

I employed this method in conjunction with interviews and focus group to form a set of various methods or triangulation, and as such I can ensure that "everything is checked from more than one angle" (Punch: 160).

4.5 The Analytical Process

This section is concerned with presenting the strategies and techniques of data analysis and interpretation. The process of data analysis involves
reconstructing the data gathered from the context in terms of meaningful units. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This is due to the nature of qualitative data that is expressed "in the form of words-that is language in the form of extended texts" carrying with them intentions and meanings generated from peoples’ opinions, experiences, attitudes, and personal reflections (Miles and Huberman, 1994:9).

The purpose of data analysis in this qualitative research is to answer the five research questions. In order to analyze my data qualitatively, I relied on Miles and Huberman’s model (1994) and Miles, et.al. (2013). In addition, I took into account other basic analytical techniques from other models such as Creswell (2007), and Lincoln and Guba (1985). The section that follows will describe the whole analytical process including the procedures and approaches followed for analyzing the collected data in this research.

According to Miles and Huberman’s model (1994), the data collected from interviews and document analysis will pass through three stages: "data reduction", "data display", and "conclusion drawing/verification". The first stage-data reduction- will be discussed in detail in this section. The second stage of the analytical process involves displaying visually the data represented by the emergent themes, concepts, and categories (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Creswell, 2007). In chapter six, discussion of findings, the key themes and concepts will be displayed in a variety of forms such as tables and charts. The aim of this stage is to display our data in a more practical and illustrative way (Miles et al, 2013, 1994; Creswell, 2007). In addition, I seek to establish associations and links among the emergent themes and develop interpretations. The conclusion drawing/verification stage will be also devoted to Chapter Six as it will be involved within the interpretation and discussion of the findings. Figure 4.2 on the next page displays the whole analytical process.
Figure 4.2: Analytical Process of the Research Data

Data Reduction

"Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions" (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 10). It involves the following steps:

Step One: Transformation
Step Two: Categorization
Step Three: Coding
Step One: Data Transformation

Having collected the data from interviews, I transformed them in a form of written texts. Below is a detailed description of the procedures I followed when transforming the data:

1. Transferring each recorded interview separately into written material in a form of questions and answers as in figure 4.3 below;

2. Focusing on the important points and comments that are relevant to the questions of the interview. Some of the participants’ answers included phrases and words that are not relevant to the research questions and the agenda of my research. This kind of phrases had been discarded;

3. Using direct quotes rather than using summary or paraphrasing. Each quote represents a word for word transcription of an answer to a particular question in the interview guide; Some quotes are not complete sentences; they might be words or run on sentences;

4. Splitting each important quote into meaningful units;

5. Organizing each unit into categories that have been initially developed on the basis of the theoretical concepts, research questions, and goals of study as indicated in Figure 4.3;

6. Reflecting on the thoughts in the data to form other categories and providing forms of evidence to support each category (Creswell, 2007).

Figure 4.3 below is a small picture illustrating the steps of reduction stage, transformation, coding, and categorization. It shows how the answer to question one is first categorized under category one, and second transcribed in a form of written text, and then the coded segments were categorized in terms of themes according to the major question of the study.
Step Two: Categorizing the Data

Deductively, five major categories have been developed based on the focused issues in research questions and the goals of study (Cresswell, 2007). Under each category, the emergent themes from the data after analysis will be grouped, defined, and displayed. Below is a list of these categories:

Category One: How do teachers at a tertiary institution in Oman design their EAP courses?

Category Two: What factors have the greatest impact on designing courses from the perspectives of teachers?

Category Three: How do students perceive the courses designed by their teachers?

Category Four: What challenges do students face in relation to course design?

Category Five: What are the suggestions by teachers and students for the improvement of course design?

It is worth mentioning that these categories have been tentatively decided in accordance with the research questions. However, there are two other categories that the current study draws on such as the ones below:

Category Six: Teachers’ Beliefs about course design;

Category Seven: Teachers’ involvement in course design
Q. 1 How do you design the courses you teach?

(M) "If I want to design a course, first of all I should start with students’ needs analysis… I have to make a survey, and I have to know their needs. What they need for example in this aspect. If I teach a language course for example, I have to design a course which satisfies the needs of my students.”
Step three: Data Coding

Coding is the third basic step of data analysis. Miles and Huberman state that coding represents a classification system of each meaningful segment of the transcribed data (Miles et al, 2013; Miles and Huberman 1994). Below is an overall description of the coding process I followed in this study in terms of practical steps followed by detailed explanation.

Step One: reviewing and reflecting on the transcribed data;
Step Two: breaking down the transcribed data;
Step Three: assigning "descriptive codes" to each meaningful piece of data (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 90);
Step Four: revising the coded segments and adding themes;
Step Five: transforming the coded segments into a separate list sheet;
Step Six: classifying and categorizing the coded segments into major categories and subcategories.

In this study, the process of coding begins with reviewing the transcribed data word by word and line by line within each particular answer of each interview. The purpose of reviewing is to decide which segment that implies important information to include and which segment that is irrelevant to pull out.

After reviewing and reflecting on the transcribed data, codes or labels were assigned below or beside each word or segment to describe the aspects of the content.

Miles and Huberman (1994: 57) suggest a more detailed system of coding that involves two levels, "descriptive" coding and "inferential coding. I applied this procedure while coding my data. First, I coded the important words and segments descriptively by means of underlining them as they exactly appear in the transcribed data without naming or paraphrasing (Miles, et al., 2013). The second level of coding is called inferential coding. It is a device of
naming, paraphrasing, and grouping the key words and segments that have been already coded into a set of themes and categories.

The last important step in the coding process is classifying the coded segments into categories and subcategories. The segments have been arranged in "a conceptual and structural order (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 67)." This is a very important step to maintain coherence among segments in terms of structural relations.

With regard to the question of how the data were analyzed, the answer is to a large extent inductively, and to some extent deductively. Inductively, means that I adopted the technique of inductive coding based on the grounded theory by Strauss (1987), where themes can be created from the data on the basis of their relevance to the major question of research and its focus. (Creswell, 2007; Esterberg, 2002). My intention is to provide more detailed analysis and successful in terms of reliability, validity, and trustworthiness. Moreover, this approach matches the exploratory and interpretive goals of my research. In addition, I relied on the deductive approach before and while coding the data, just for the purpose of categorizing data in terms of the five major questions of the study. While coding, I also operationalized the deductive approach for further categorization. This kind of categorization has been done in terms of the theoretical concepts derived from the literature review.

It is worth remarking that the data were coded manually because the researcher is more familiar with her data than the computer. Accordingly, I could easily recognize and pick up the key terms and concepts. I highlighted each meaningful segment using different colors according to the different categories of data.
4.6 Trustworthiness of the findings

It is essential to evaluate the quality and goodness of a research study. This needs the employment of certain criteria such as validity, reliability, and trustworthiness. However, the use of these criteria depends on which paradigm the research study draws on. Lincoln and Guba (1985) prefer to use the criterion of trustworthiness for evaluating qualitative research and the criteria of validity and reliability for evaluating quantitative research.

Guba (1981) uses ‘Trustworthiness’ as a general term that involves four criteria within qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and Confirmability to stand for validity, generalizability, reliability, and objectivity, respectively within quantitative research. To ensure the quality of this research, I endeavor to design a good, ethical, and trustworthy study through the application of the criterion of trustworthiness with its four standards. A description of each of those standards will be provided in the following sections.

**Credibility** - is concerned with “how can one establish the truth of the findings of a particular inquiry” (Guba, 1981:79), and whether or not the findings make sense through reflecting on the original views of the participants (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Miles and Huberman, 1994). In order to ensure the credibility of the findings of this research, I have adopted certain strategies developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), Miles and Huberman (1994), and Creswell (2007).

The first strategy is “Prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field” (Creswell, 2007: 208) that requires the presence of a researcher in the context of study with persistent observation. It also requires spending sufficient time and interaction with the participants. This helps the researcher to gain an insight about the context of the investigated phenomenon. During the period of designing and piloting the current study, and data collection and analysis, I have been in touch with the participants. This is due to my work in
the same context where the current study took place. Thus, my prolonged engagement in the field and persistent observation provided me with a good opportunity to meet the participants continuously, my colleagues and students, and this in turn helped me understand and explore their multiple beliefs and views regarding the investigated issue.

The second procedure for ensuring credibility was ‘Triangulation’ that involves making use of “multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide cooperating evidence” (Creswell, 2007: 208). In the recent study, I used the data/ informants triangulation technique that uses different sources of data collection or research instruments such as semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and the document analysis (method triangulation). In addition, I interviewed the majority of teachers (nine out of twelve) who work in the context of the study and five groups of students from different levels to collect adequate and deep data for the research.

Transferability- refers to the degree to which the findings of a study can be transferred to other contexts. Although qualitative research deals with social and behavioural phenomena that are “context bound” (Guba, 1981:86) transferability is possible if the contexts are similar (ibid). This study seeks to enhance transferability by adopting the criteria of purposeful sampling and the level of description of data and context (Guba, 1981). Li (2004: 305) states that thick description “enables judgments about how well the research context fits other contexts”. For this, I selected a purposeful sample that is intended to provide a thick description of information. The selected teachers and students are all involved in the investigated issue, and as such they contributed to the richness of data by their lived experiences. The thick description involved description of the research process including methods of data collection, data analysis, and the final report of interpretation through chapters Five, Six, and Seven. In addition, I provided a detailed description of the context in Chapter Two.
**Dependability** - or reliability are concerned with whether the results of a study can be consistently repeated if the study were replicated by the same or different participants in the same context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2007).

In order to enhance reliability in my research, I followed several procedures. First, I used a good quality recorder for recording all interviews. Creswell recommends that “reliability can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing a good quality tape for recording and by transcribing the tape” (2007:209). Second, I followed the same process of coding suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) (for further discussion see section 4.5 concerned with data analysis). Third, in order to ensure further reliability, I asked each teacher participant to use codes and labels for each key term and segment of his/her transcribed interview. That procedure was useful in determining the similarities and differences between my own interpretations of the data and their own. Most of the codes and labels I assigned to every transcribed interview were similar to those assigned by the concerned participant.

**Confirmability** - is the fourth standard that ensures the quality of research. It refers to the degree of neutrality whereby the findings of a study are supported by the respondents avoiding the researcher’s bias, motivation, and interest (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In this study, the findings reflect the participants’ views rather than reflecting my own views or bias. Enhancing this issue has been done through providing a clear audit trail, as a strategy suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The audit trail describes in detail how data were collected, how data were analysed, and how categories were developed. Section 4.5 in this chapter provides a detailed description of these procedures. In addition, Chapter Five provides many examples of direct quotations from the data to support the process of categorization and interpretations presented in Chapter Six.
4.7 Ethical Considerations

All ethical considerations have been taken into account before conducting the semi structured interviews. Accordingly, all participants (teachers and students) were given consent letters explaining the purpose of the research, setting out their rights as research participants and inviting them to take part (Appendix 7 and 8). Then, I gained all informed consent and kept them with me. In addition, I have reviewed all ethics regulations that are required by Exeter University as stated in the discussion below.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants have been protected by the following ethical considerations below:

- using ethical forms to be signed by the participant before the interview;
- informing the participants of the research agenda, goals and significance of study;
- using pseudonyms such as initial letters instead of the real names of the participants and the college in the sections on data analysis and discussion of findings;
- Ensuring that the data will be only used by the researcher and her supervisors and for research purposes only (not by others and not for other purposes);
- Informing the participants that the data will be kept with the researcher only, and if any participant needs them he/she can request them from the researcher.
Minimizing of harm

The methods that had been used for data collection involved semi structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. The semi structured interviews had been conducted individually with nine teachers who are instructors at the department of English, at a private College in Oman. The focus group discussions were conducted with four groups of undergraduate students. In order to avoid any harm or unreasonable stress, the researcher explained to the participants the purpose of the interview and the goals of research and that their participation is of high importance. In addition, she ensured that their anonymity and confidentiality will be protected and respected. Both, the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were held in the researcher’s office at the college after classrooms.

4.8 Limitations of Study

The current study contributes to knowledge and research by investigating qualitatively the issue of EAP course design within the scope of language curriculum design. The central focus of the study is on the investigation of the mechanism of course design and its surrounding factors. In addition it focuses on a particular group of participants, teachers and students, within a particular context. In spite of its contribution to knowledge and research, there are certain limitations that must be considered by the researcher in order not to highly affect the generalizability of the study findings. The limitations are listed below.

• The case study methodology. The case study has been selected as the strategy for designing this qualitative study for purposes mentioned previously. Nevertheless, it is a small scale study with small groups of participants within a bound context. This has impacts on the issue of generalizability. Gathering data from multiple tertiary institutions would
provide a large sample size in order to get more data to answer the research questions.

- **The size of sampling.** The small number of participants, particularly student participants also represents another limitation of the study. This also impacts the generalizability of the research findings. Involving more teachers and students as instruments for data collection might help give a more universal representation of the situation.

- **The number of interviews.** This study was limited to a number of interviews which is due to the busy schedule of teachers and students. Conduction more interviews would have enriched amount of data collected for the purpose of exploration and interpretation.

**Summary of the Chapter**

The current study draws on the interpretive paradigm and accordingly the qualitative approach has been chosen to determine the appropriateness of research design. The study is based on five research questions that are exploratory in nature with the purpose of exploring and understanding all issues regarding the investigated phenomenon. In order to answer these questions, three types of methods of data collection have been used: semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions with the sample of teachers and students, respectively. In addition, the method of document analysis has been used to support teacher data. The chapter also involves a section concerned with how the gathered data will be analyzed and interpreted. In addition, the chapter presents certain issues relating to research design such as trustworthiness, ethical issues, and limitation of the study. Overall, the current chapter provides a holistic picture of research design and the subsequent stages to be achieved through the next chapters.
CHAPTER FIVE
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings collected from teachers and students by methods of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, respectively with the aim of capturing a variety of participants' experiences and views. It also presents the findings obtained from the document analysis - the third method used for collecting data. This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section presents the findings obtained from the teachers' interviews and the document analysis in response to Question One and Question Two of this study. The second section presents the findings from the students' focus group discussion in response to Question Three and Question Four. The third section presents the findings of Question Five of study that involves both teachers and students’ suggestions for improving course design. For the purpose of presenting more sensible and coherent data the findings will be categorized in terms of the research questions composed for this study.

5.1 Teachers’ Data: Interviews and Document Analysis

This section presents in detail the findings emerging from the teachers' interviews and the document analysis data. It is organized into two sections described in terms of Question One and Question Two (for details about the questions of study see section 4.1)

As a result of analyzing the data gained from the teachers’ interviews, a variety of themes emerged. The discussion that follows is going to demonstrate teachers’ responses organized by themes and supported by the teachers’ own words in the form of quotes from the interview transcript.
5.1.1 How do Teachers Design their EAP Courses?

When the teachers were asked how they design the courses they teach followed by a list of subsequent questions (see Appendix 3 – Teachers Interview Guide), they provided a variety of views and beliefs. The data will show that these teachers resolve their different understandings of students’ needs with their understanding of course content – this in turn is mediated by their understanding of what good practice is. This understanding has consequences in the way the elements of a course are selected and delivered. There are visible individual differences in the data and these tensions are resolved differently by different teachers.

This section is organized into two sub sections: section 5.1.1.1 presents the major theme that emerged from the general description of course design, whereas section 5.1.1.2 presents the findings concerned with the articulation of course components.

Overall, the data show that the teachers conceptualized course design as a process of prioritizing and articulating the basic learning elements. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable variation among their responses regarding which element to start with and which element to prioritize. The majority of participants prefer to start with addressing students’ needs, while a few of them prefer to start with one of the basic elements like learning objectives or materials design. It has been remarked that some participants were consistent in their responses while others like (F and S) blended their priorities in a different way as indicated through the next discussion. Generally, teachers’ responses might be categorized in terms of four priorities as shown below:

Priority one-starting with students’ needs
Priority two-starting with methodology (beliefs about how to teach)
Priority three-focuses on conceptualizing content (sequencing materials and integrating language skills)
Priority four-starting with learning objectives
The first priority was shared by five teachers (A, M, N, R, and W) who prefer to start designing their courses by addressing students' needs. This is based on their argument that students' needs help inform the articulation and development of other elements. Nevertheless, the teachers were different both in their perceptions of students' needs and in how they influence the articulation of other elements. The complex ways by which these teachers articulated their understanding of students' needs is discussed fully in 5.1.1. The ways this understanding is then applied to course design is discussed in section 5.1.2.

The second category involves beliefs about how to teach a course. This was implied by participants (L and F) who gave priority to methodology when designing a course. Participant (L) perceives methodology as a socio-cultural component of a course that contributes to providing instructions, activities, and learning.

Methodology...is considered curriculum design ...we need communication in writing and in oral skills. We need to prepare socialising component, cultural component of education. Socialising means hands on instructions, hands on activities, not just learning... Part of methodology is curriculum design and part of curriculum design is methodology...

Participant (F) also focused on methodology when he referred to a point that can be described in terms of interrelatedness among three types of components: “lecture”, “the teacher”, and “presentations” in order to “convey knowledge to the students”. As such, this point could be linked to the focus on methodology. For this he stated that:

The most important component is the lecture itself, the teacher, and there are other components like ... presentations... In literature courses, I focus on lectures, and give some space for presentations... assignments and reviewing articles.
The third priority is suggested by participant (C) whose focus is on conceptualizing content. This teacher believes that designing a language course must integrate the four language skills. In her argument she states that “…I prefer to design language courses in an integrated way, for example a course should involve grammar, vocabulary, and language skills”. In this sense, she expressed her dissatisfaction of designing a language course focusing on a single skill such as speaking, reading, or writing as the case of offering courses in our department.

The fourth priority involves designing a language course based on the learning objectives. The data show one participant (S) who considered learning objectives as the starting point that leads to developing other elements such as materials and skills for classroom practice. She reported that “We have first of all to define the objectives and then we select the materials according to the objectives...”

It has been noticed that not all participants fit into one category. For example, Participant (F) focused on methodology in category three, and at the same time he referred to the importance of content. He conceptualized the content in terms of sequencing materials in a logical way. Although the term ‘materials’ is used differently by specialists of course designers as “any systematic description of the techniques and exercises to be used in classroom teaching” (Brown, 1995:139), this teacher used it to refer to the content or syllabus design.

I start generally, and then I move to what is specific and particular. For example, when I teach Victorian novel, the first thing is to devote the first week to the age of Victorian novel, then I proceed to ... discuss the text.

So far, this section has shown that teachers conceptualize course design differently and that the difference is marked by which elements are prioritized. However students’ needs stands out as the element most consistently
mentioned by most participants. The following explores this common pattern of response.

5.1.1.1 How do Teachers Perceive Students’ Needs when designing courses?

This section is concerned with presenting further details about how and why teachers prioritize students’ needs. The results have shown that these teachers provided a variety of perspectives regarding students’ needs. Therefore, the findings obtained from teachers’ perceptions will be grouped in terms of three categories: the importance of addressing students’ needs, analysis of students’ needs, and procedures of needs analysis.

With regard to the category of the importance of students’ needs, the majority of teachers argued that addressing students’ needs is considered as a key factor that contributes to the efficiency and practicality of course design. Although participant (S) prioritized the element of learning objectives in section 5.1.1, she emphasized the importance of students’ needs describing this element as “the driving force” that leads to building up the whole course (S). Similarly, participant (M) considered it as the starting stage saying that “If I want to design a course, first of all I should start with students’ needs analysis.” In this respect, the teachers held particular beliefs regarding the importance of students’ needs.

Two participants (A and M) believe that considering students’ needs from the beginning of a course saves teachers the trouble of designing irrelevant courses—that is courses that don’t respond to what students need. In this regard, participant (A) reported that “If needs are not addressed in the course, the course will not be relevant to the students”. Similarly, participant (M) argues that if students’ needs were not addressed from the beginning, the teachers might expect the risk of conflict between what students need and what is already prepared.
When we analyze students’ needs we discover what they like or need. If we don’t address students’ needs, later on, when we start teaching the course, we discover that the students need something else, so we … have to satisfy the students’ needs. (M)

In his emphasis on prioritizing students’ needs, participant (M) considers this element as the starting stage in course design.

In addition, four teachers (F, M, N, and R) believe that addressing students’ needs helps determine the articulation of other elements such as materials design, content, methodology, and learning objectives. For example, participant (N) states that he takes the element of students’ needs into account because it helps teachers to find the materials and methodology that are suitable for students. In this regard he focused on two types of students’ needs: their language level and their preferences that lead him to be “practical rather than theoretical”. He explained the idea of being practical in terms of designing tasks and activities that engage students into classroom interaction and discussion. The excerpt below serves as an illustrative example of this comment:

I need to take into consideration two important things. The first one is which semester this course is designed for ... and the level of students because this is going to help you find the material that is suitable for your students... The second thing I take into consideration is to be practical not theoretical.

Participant (F) provided a similar argument, but with more focus on the content and methodology. In his preference of students’ needs, he stated that:

Students’ needs should be considered in planning an effective course…. to show a good command of content and educational skills. Without knowing our students needs the course may be useless.

Likewise, participant (R) designs his courses on the basis of what students need. He focused on “their abilities, their deficiencies, and their preferences”
that in light of which he selects his materials. The excerpt below illustrates this:

I always look at the students I have, their abilities, their deficiencies, and their preferences. Sometimes the students don’t know anything about the course they have but they have preferences. So I just try to find what they like when I design my course.

These teachers clearly emphasize the importance of students’ needs. However it is in the varied understanding of the needs that the data reveal the connection between perceptions of need and design choices. Accordingly, several themes emerged that can be used to classify students’ needs culturally, linguistically, and psychologically.

Culturally, one participant (A) confirmed that knowing students’ culture helps “to suit the course to the … students”. Linguistically, two teachers (A and N) argued that teachers must take into consideration “the students’ level” (A). Likewise, participant (N) said “I need to take into consideration... what kind of level the students have because this is going to help you to find the material that is suitable for your students, not just providing information”. Participant (W), on the other hand showed his interest in focusing on individual differences regarding students’ skills of fluency when he said “I need to understand the students’ … needs and who the skillful students are? Their fluency is important...So I give them special material to improve their fluency”.

Analyzing students’ needs intellectually and socially was provided by participant (F) who said that:

We should look at students not only as intellectuals but also as social beings and these dimensions interact to influence learning and performance. So students’ needs should be considered in planning an effective course. We should know who our students are and take into consideration their prior knowledge, intellectual development.
Participant (S) considers psychological factors, are informing her methodology explaining that students’ needs can shape classroom practice. Her argument is based on the rationale that teaching language is difficult and therefore we should think of “lively topics” for classroom motivation. This is illustrated in her quote below:

Psychological factors are very important. It is very easy to give a lecture to the students and make them motivated … but for the language it is static and as such we must change it into very lively topics…

She proceeded in her argument to raise another issue in addressing students’ needs that is the tension between designing a course at the class level or at the individual level. This is evident in her quote below:

We cannot say that all the students are the same. There are individual differences. It is sometimes difficult to focus on every student’s needs but we take into consideration the common needs.

The third category involves the procedures followed for analyzing students’ needs. Since there is no formal procedure in the department concerned with analyzing students’ needs, teachers (like A, L, N, F, R, and S) said that they do it individually. For example, two participants (M and W) reported that they do it “by questionnaire or by asking the students what they studied before or what they prefer” (M) or “by asking students direct questions and conducting interviews” (W). The other participants said that they do by means of classroom observation and their daily interaction with students.
5.1.1.2 How do Teachers Articulate the Basic Elements of Course Design?

Section 5.1.1 has revealed that teachers in this context perceive course design as a matter of prioritizing different key elements and that this in turn contributes to the articulation of the other elements of course design. This section presents the findings that show how teachers articulate the basic elements of course design.

The findings presented in this section are based on two types of data. The first type involves teachers’ perceptions collected from the semi-structured interviews, while the second type involves the findings collected from the method of document analysis. The latter is concerned with the analysis of what is called ‘a course plan’ (for further information about a course plan see section 4.4.2.3 and Appendix 6).
Analysis of Learning Objectives Based on Teachers’ Views

When teachers were asked about how they develop their course objectives, they didn’t respond in a similar way. However, their responses can be grouped into three categories. The first category involves two participants (C and R) who prefer to adopt the learning objectives stated by the department when designing their courses. In this respect, participant (R) stated that “Within the department, they have their own objectives and accordingly they have chosen the courses according to certain criteria. Therefore, I follow the department’s goals”.

The second category involves three teachers (M, S, and W) who prefer to develop the objectives of their courses. They argued that when they develop the course objectives, they depend on their contextual expertise taking into account their students’ needs and other considerations as has been indicated in section 5.1.1. The quote below shows how participant (M) develops the objectives of his courses.

Sometimes I formulate the objectives according to my experience. I use techniques and methods that help me... I decide on the methods to be used...so I formulate the objectives first...We prepare our objectives based on the needs of our students.

Likewise, participant (W) argued that he determines the goals based on considering students’ needs. In this respect, he reported that:

The main goal is to have my students speak fluently; therefore I determine the goal based on the questions I ask at the beginning of the course...Are my students fluent? Do they have sufficient background knowledge?

Participant (S) argued that although the idea of developing goals is not easy, she tries to do it relying on her beliefs about students’ needs. In this respect, she reported that “I feel that it is not easy to develop the objectives because it
is challenging…However, I always try for each objective to provide students with knowledge… and skills”.

The third category involves four teachers (A, F, L, and N) whose views are different from those in category two as they don’t prefer to develop the goals and objectives depending completely on their own beliefs and experiences. Rather, they prefer to integrate or compromise between the objectives previously set on by the department with the objectives they develop based on what they contextually believe is important for their students. Participant (L) supported the idea of integration when she said “based on what I consider is important for students…I compromise between the department’s objectives and students’ levels and needs”.

Nevertheless, the theme of integration was viewed differently by some participants and as such other themes could be further generated such as subjectivity vs formality and realism vs idealism, and comprehensiveness. The theme of subjectivity vs formality was suggested by participant (F) who said “I depend on the department’s goals and objectives, but I like to be subjective when I develop the objectives”. He further explained the idea of subjectivity in terms of his beliefs about what the students and the requirements of the course.

The idea of integrating between what idealism and realism was suggested by participant (N) who reported that:

Whenever you are going to plan you need to have plan A beside plan B. Plan A is what you are going to teach in the course. Plan B is the backup plan, the supporting plan. It is like what you are going to put in your mind to make the objectives and finding more easy, simplest, and enjoyable just to overcome the problem.

The idea of integration was also viewed differently by participant (A) who suggested that a teacher must have a comprehensive view in developing the objectives of a course. By this he means taking everything into account such
as the faculty goals... the department's aims, the students' needs and aims of the course”.

**Analysis of Learning Objectives Stated on the Course Plan**

This section involves an analysis of the goals and objectives that are stated on the course plan concerned with some particular courses, particularly those that are selected for students focus discussion. As has been mentioned previously the course plan involves description of the basic elements of a course, among them are the elements of goals and objectives. The course plan involves two sections entitled ‘Program Learning Outcomes’ and ‘Students Learning Outcomes’ to stand for goals and objectives, respectively. A closer examination of the sections concerned with those components (Program Learning Outcomes and Student Learning Outcomes) in Table 5.1 below we can identify several patterns and features.

First, the statement of the ‘Program Learning Outcomes’ involves a general description of the English program: “Our graduates demonstrate good control of the four basic skills for acquiring and exchanging information.” The same statement is adopted in many courses such as General English, Study Skills, Essay Writing, and others.

Second, With respect to the ‘Student Learning Outcomes’, we can see that the formulation and phrasing of each outcome is based on Bloom’s et. al., Taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002) beginning with an action verb such as apply, analyze, demonstrate, and recognize.

Third, each of the four courses (General English, Grammar, Study Skills, and Essay Writing (see appendix 6) involves at least four learning outcomes whose focus is restricted on only three dimensions: analysis, application, and comprehension. The taxonomy of Bloom’s et.al., involves “six major categories within the cognitive domain: Knowledge, Comprehension,
Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation” (Krathwohl, 2002: 212). However, in the course plan, there is no focus on other categories such as knowledge, synthesis and evaluation.

Table 5.1: Goals and Learning Objectives Stated on Course Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Program Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study Skills</td>
<td>Our graduates will be able to demonstrate good control of the four basis language skills for acquiring and exchanging information.</td>
<td>• Recognize the strategies of effective study skills; • Demonstrate reading skills and presentation skills; • Apply note-taking skills and research methodology; • Analyze structural and thematic aspects of written texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General English</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Use English effectively for oral communication in formal and informal situations and build up vocabulary; • Apply grammatical structures meaningfully in spoken and written texts; • Read and understand texts dealing with different topics from varied resources; • Write a variety of texts including e-mails and letters (formal and informal), and stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Brainstorm, free-write, organize an outline, write drafts revise and edit; • Correct run on sentences; • Use structural devices like transitions and connectors and passives,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Introduction to Modern Grammar | Our graduate use English grammatical structures to speak and write for communication | conditionals and clauses;  
- Write different types of five - paragraph essays with an introductory paragraph consisting of a hook, background information and theses statement, three body paragraphs and a concluding paragraph.  
- Demonstrating the accurate use of various types of perfect aspects orally and in writing;  
- Distinguishing by form, meaning, and use different types of models and use them in academic and social settings;  
- Identifying and use patterns of passive voice in spoken and written discourse;  
- Analyzing and using appropriately the patterns of gerunds and infinitives in written texts;  
- Understanding and distinguish the different patterns of conditional sentences |

**Conceptualizing the Course Content Based on Teachers’ Interviews**

Having analysed the data concerned with how teachers articulate the content of a particular course, I noticed that they referred to this component in terms of the selection of topics. The major finding I gained regarding this question was that from the perspectives of teachers the selection of the course topics should be based on students’ needs. However, they showed a variety of views regarding the selection of content or topics depending on students’
needs. For example, two participants (A and S) focused on what students prefer in the classroom. Accordingly, they strongly argued for taking into consideration what students like or prefer when selecting the topics for a particular course. Participant (A) believes that it is not a practical idea to determine the topics prior to starting of the course. His argument and justification are both stated in his quote below:

It is not practical to choose the topics at the beginning of the course. You cannot decide specific items, but we have general frames… sometimes you prefer something but in class you have to change it. It depends on what they like.

Similarly, participant (S) argued that she has to be responsive to students’ preferences when selecting topics. She justified her argument on the basis of considering what students prefer in the classroom. Therefore, she explained that “Sometimes I select the topics, but when I go to class, I find the context demands different things... I choose the topics that involve the students in classroom discussion.”

Thus, for some teachers in this sample, students’ preferences have impacted the process of course design by prompting teachers to respond flexibly to students’ needs and desires. However, In spite of the strongly stated commitment to prioritising students’ needs, there is more variety of motivation prompting topic selection than might be predicted from their stated objectives. Thematically, we can categorise their responses in terms of several features such as practicality, familiarity, simplicity, variety, suitability, and alignment.

Participants (N) argued that teachers must be practical when selecting topics because students prefer practice in classroom more than theoretical discussions. Accordingly, he should be responsive to his students saying “I prefer to choose topics from the textbook that are practical and interesting”. He further elaborated on practicality by explaining that according to students’ beliefs learning language comes through involving students into classroom
practice such as doing exercises, participating in discussion, oral presentations, acting, and games.

Participant (R) raised two issues in selecting topics, familiarity and simplicity. With regard to familiarity, he reported that his students prefer the topics they are familiar with particularly the social topics such as shopping, wedding, cooking, and the like. Some courses such as Oral Skills and General English introduce a collection of topics that are academic. However, “The students don’t like any topic, but they like social topics because they have background about them”. With regard to simplicity he added that his students are more concerned about the exam and as such they prefer easy topics- that are within the basic rather than the advanced level in order to pass the exam easily. For this he said “but the idea is that they have in mind the exam. They immediately jump to the exam. They say these topics are difficult’. In this case the exam constitutes a key factor determining the selection of topics.

In terms of suitability, participant (W) raised a crucial issue advocating that teachers in this particular context have to be aware of whether the topic is culturally and socially suitable or not to the classroom context. In this regard he argued that “we have to take into consideration everything such as selecting videos, listening, and selecting topics. For example, I avoid such topics as clothes design, kissing or dating”.

Another idea about topic selection is defined in terms of offering a variety of topics rather than restricting oneself with the topics in the textbook. This idea was proposed by (L) when she reported that “The topics of a course must be a combination of items not just based on one topic... I follow the textbook, but I always use my materials for my presentations, and the textbook is supplementary to my presentations”.

One participant (M) was different from his colleagues as he doesn’t select the topics in accordance with students’ classroom preferences. Rather he prefers
to choose the suitable topics in alignment with the objectives of a course and the materials used for teaching. He reported that the topic should go with the objectives...I choose the objectives, the topic, and then the teaching material...”

Overall, with regard to the element of the articulation of content, all teachers agree that it must be determined by students’ needs. Accordingly, they suggested several criteria as the ones illustrated above to be taken into account when articulating this element.

**Conceptualizing the Course Content Based on Document Analysis**

This section presents the findings that emerged from the analysis of the course plan format. Looking at the format of four courses (General English, Introduction to Modern Grammar, Study Skills, and Essay Writing) (see Appendix 6) we can see that the selection of topics is stated in a separate section under the title of “Course Study Plan”.

Examining the course plan, I have concluded several points. First, the topics for each course are adopted from a textbook. For example, the topics selected for the General English course are adopted from a textbook entitled: *New Headway Plus /Intermediate* as in Figure 5.2 below. Second, sequencing the topics is typical to that in the textbook beginning from unit one to unit five. Moreover, the plan also shows how those topics are distributed into sixteen weeks of study. Third, this section doesn’t show any further details such as listing other subheadings, activities, and other language skills relevant to each topic.

Comparing the data based on teachers’ interviews and the data based on document analysis regarding the selection of topics leads to the finding that teachers in this context have the flexibility to not follow exactly what they previously stated on the course plan. Prior to starting the course, teachers
prepare the course plan with a section involving a description of the topics for the course. However, during the course, teachers need to consider the factor of students’ needs, and accordingly they make some modifications in terms of certain decisions such as practicality, suitability, simplicity, familiarity, variety, and alignment.

**Figure 5.2: Course Plan of the General English Course-Selection of Topics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Timing (in Weeks)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It is a wonderful world</td>
<td>3 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Get happy</td>
<td>2 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Test1</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Telling Tales</td>
<td>2 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Doing the right thing</td>
<td>2 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Test2</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>On the Move</td>
<td>2 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I just love it</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>2 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total No of Weeks</td>
<td>16 Weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Materials Selection Based on Teachers’ Interviews**

When the participants were asked about how they select their materials and on what basis, they all said that they rely on the textbook. However, they supplement it by other materials such as power points, videos, and presentations. One participant (R) was exceptional since he said that “I mainly rely on the textbook”.

Some teachers described how they use supplementary materials and on what basis. Overall, their descriptions can be identified in terms of integration, alignment, students’ needs, objectivity vs subjectivity, and adaptation. For
example, participant (L) described how she mediates or integrates between the textbook and the supplementary materials that are based on her presentations and creativity. In this respect, she stated that:

I develop my own materials. I try to use the book... I try to make combination between the textbook and my materials. I also develop my presentations.

Three participants (A, M and S) described their use of supplementary materials in terms of alignment with the aims and objectives of a course. For instance, participant (A) reported that “When I choose the materials... I should see that the topics are related to the course... Sometimes we choose topics, but they are unrelated to the course.... So we should suit them to the course aims and to the students...” Similarly, participant (M) said “The materials I choose depend on the objectives formulated at the beginning”. For this purpose he supplements the textbook with materials from other sources.

Participant (S), on the other hand, argued that she chooses the materials that are suitable and satisfactory to students. Furthermore, she supports her colleagues’ belief about the alignment between materials selection and the course objectives.

... I prefer to teach materials that ... satisfy the students. I believe if the students love the material, they will love to learn...

I select the materials according to the objectives of a course. Sometimes books, videos, YouTube, lectures, interviews. So I take what is suitable for me to supplement the book...

However, two teachers (C and W) were very brief in their discussion of material selection. Participant (C) said “I use the textbook and video materials. “Participant (W) was also brief when he said “I mainly depend on the textbook and supplementary materials such as PowerPoint presentation”. This finding, however leads us to draw out a negative conclusion that can be described in terms of restrictions or limitations of materials design.
Participant (F) raised another issue—that is objectivity vs subjectivity—when selecting materials. He confirmed that he cannot be "subjective" in choosing the material, in the sense that he is not free in the choice of the materials based on his beliefs. Rather, he is limited by the objectives of the course and the type of courses that are literary and, as such they demand the choice of special texts determined by the department. However, he encouraged the idea of using supplementary materials such as websites. Furthermore, he referred to the idea of adaptation by asking students to search for other supplementary texts, but adapt them according to the ones in the textbook. His ideas are illustrated in his quote below:

I cannot be subjective in choosing the materials. We are limited by choosing the materials... For example, in Victorian Novel ... I have the freedom to choose the writer. But here I think to be objective is important. I mean to be objective in my choice because there are figures that most English Departments agree as being important...

The materials for literature are texts... Sometimes, I advise students to visit websites... I like to give the students freedom to choose another text but adapt it to feel that they are creative...

Participant (N) prefers the idea of adaptation. He prefers to adapt the materials to be more “practical in accordance with the learners’ interest”. Students in this context as most teachers confirmed prefer practical tasks and activities more than theoretical materials.

Materials Analysis Based on the Course Plan

Through the discussion above, I presented the findings of interviews. This part of the discussion is concerned with presenting the findings generated by the analysis of the Course Plan. Examining the course plan for the English courses, I have noticed that there is no detailed description of the materials used for a course. The description, however, is mainly limited to the use of textbooks and some recommended websites and links. There is a section concerned with description of the materials selection entitled as
“Recommended Text Book” and “Recommended Websites and Links” (see Appendix 5).

By the end of this section, it is important to refer to a summary of findings that have been designed in a form of table provided in Appendix (9) outlining how teachers design their courses. The table is organized into two parts. The first part is concerned with showing teachers’ views regarding the process of course design. The second part is concerned with showing teachers’ views regarding the articulation of the basic learning components of a course.

5.1.2 What Factors have the most Impact on designing EAP Courses at the College Level from the Perspectives of Teachers?

In order to understand what factors the teachers believe have the most impact on their EFL/EAP course design, I asked all participants the following questions:

- What factors affect your course design?
- Do you face any challenges when you design your course? In what way do these challenges affect your course design?
- If there are problems how do you handle them?

It is striking that when teachers were asked to explore the factors informing design decisions, this was interpreted in terms of challenges and problems and there is no mention of positive factors. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable divergence in their identification of the source of these factors. Generally, they ascribed their challenges to two factors: students and the department. The factors therefore can be mainly categorised as Student Factors and Departmental Factors presented in sections 5.1.2.1 and 5.1.2.2, respectively.

In response to the question ‘How these factors affect course design?’ The data show that they have three types of impacts. First, they have impacts on course design elements, particularly in relation to materials design, selection
of topics, and preparing exams. Second, they have impacts on teachers by prompting them to be more responsive to the students’ needs and desires. Third, such factors have negative impacts on teachers’ psychology causing pressure, stress, and confusion.

As to how teachers handle the problems, most of them stated that they could survive those challenges based on their contextual experience and beliefs. Practically, some of them provided certain helpful ideas that can be described in terms of a general category- Adaptation which makes two themes: teachers adapting courses and teachers adapting themselves.

In order to provide coherent and sensible data, this section presents findings in terms of the two factors identified, their effects, and how the participants handle these factors. Each of those themes is supported by illustrative quotes. Furthermore, the section presents Figure 5.3 that summarizes the relationship between these themes.
Figure 5.3: Factors Affecting Course Design

Factors Affecting Course Design

Student Factors
- Students’ culture
- Students’ level
- Students’ preferences

Departmental Factors
- *Selection of textbooks
- *Compromising between departmental goals and students’ needs
- *Absence of curriculum committee
- *Class size
- *Finding suitable materials
- *Lack of teachers reflection
- *Shortage of time

Effects on elements of course design
- Materials selection
- Topics selection
- Preparing exams

Effects on teachers

Handling challenges & problems
- Adapting course design
- Adapting teacher’s style
5.1.2.1 Student Factors

In response to the category of ‘student factors’, the data show there are three types of analyses and as such they fall into three sub-categories. The first category is concerned with students’ culture. The second category is concerned with students’ linguistic level. The third category involves analyses in terms of students’ preferences.

Category One: Students Factor-Cultural Background

Based on data analysis, three teachers (A, C, and W) coming from different countries considered students’ culture that is different from their culture as a challenging factor arguing that it negatively influenced designing courses. This finding further raises two crucial issues. The first issue relates to the way these teachers see or understand their students’ cultural background. The second issue relates to the impact of students’ cultural background on the process of teaching inside and outside the classroom. In particular, this issue impacted three basic elements: exams, methodology, and the selection of topics and materials.

Participant (A) analysed critically students’ culture in terms of their attitude, narrow thinking, less interest in study, and their focus on getting certificates as indicated in the first quote below. However, he could challenge this factor by taking important decisions such as change and adaptation. The excerpt below demonstrates his comments.

Factors- …culture in the classroom has its function... For example, the students cannot prepare for the exam. They cannot study. Also ... the attitude of the students... The students often say we don't like this... sometimes students want only a degree in English... Here they don’t think in a broader way, they think in a narrow way.

Handling factors- When I design the course I should decide how to suit the course to the students and ...design a balanced course
meeting the students' needs and the faculty needs… I shouldn’t allow these factors to affect the course negatively ... So what I have to do is that I have to take the positives of these factors not the negatives...The students have desire, so I take their desire into consideration. Sometimes we have to change ... We should be flexible...Some specific topics are not interesting to the students. Sometimes we adapt our courses.”

Participant (C) criticized students’ culture, but in terms of their social behaviour that conflicts with her American culture. This supports the finding that has been previously mentioned about the conflict between teacher’s identity and students’ identity. In this respect, she said that “our students are very relaxed not punctual. They spend the first 15 minutes coming into the class and greeting each other and interrupting me…” In response to how this challenge affected course design, she reflected on her struggling in a strong way when she said:

**Effects**- I have expectations of what I wanted to teach. I have to decide if I will teach them in an American way or I have to teach them in an Arabic way. ... It affects the way of teaching, the methodology of teaching, and how much I teach. ...It also affects testing. Because I couldn't teach them the way I was supposed to do; the test was not challenging...

Similarly, participant (W) reflected on his struggling with students in this context. He said that “they come to the classroom with their first language culture and we as teachers have to respect their culture”. He considered this as a problem creating “conflict between the teacher and students’ cultures”. In response to how he can deal with such a challenge, he said that he has to be aware in his selection of topics. He has to select the topics that are culturally suitable to the students.

Participant (L) raised another cultural issue but at a broader level. Unlike her colleagues (A, C, and W) who directly criticized their students’ cultural background, participant (L) reflected on her struggling on a broader level, i.e. on the level of the society and faculty. At the society level, she is suffering from cultural difference, while at the faculty level she is suffering from its
policy. This is due to its being a private sector and as such it offers special support and facilities to students which contradict with her professional view. This is obvious when she critically commented that:

I cannot find a suitable environment... There are cultural differences. When you move to another country they put you down... In this particular scenario, I cannot fail the students because if I fail them, the shark will eat me.

Consequently, this challenge affected designing her courses, but she could handle the dilemma saying that “I adapted myself; I have to survive”.

**Category Two: Student Factors-Linguistic Level**

The second challenge that emerged under the category of “Student Factor” is described in terms of students’ linguistic background. The data reveal that five teachers (M, F, N, S, and W) reflected on their struggling with this challenge. They critically analyzed it in terms of several themes such as “students’ poor language” (M), “students’ low input” (S), students’ being pragmatically poor (S), and students’ being “unqualified to study literature” (F).

For example, participant (S) criticized negatively the poor level of students’ abilities in pragmatic understanding. Because of this she feels tempted to prepare easy exams in order not to “fail the students”. In order to solve the problem, she tries to balance the situation by being firm, selective, and fair as stated in her quote below.

**Factors**- The input is very poor. The students are not good... There are students who pragmatically understand the course but they are few.

**Effects**- So I have to be selective and choose easy exam and skip those that are difficult... I don't want to fail the students.
Handling factors... I design the course ... with easy materials. I can make it challenging...I try to be firm with students, but for the exam I try to be selective and fair... I am trying to balance the situation.”

Participant (F) referred to another serious challenge relating to the students’ inability and low linguistic level to study English literature. Because of this students are not well prepared to study literature. Consider what he said:

Factors- Really, the problem is with the students. It is not easy to teach them literature as literature because the students are not qualified to study literature. ..... The level of students is low”.

Effects- All challenges I mentioned make me think that I should delete some parts of the material...In my course plan the students should be able to analyse characters, but in fact students cannot... so I feel I lost material and content because of that course.”

Handling factors- I have to adapt the course according to the students’ level.

A fourth problem regarding students' linguistic level is provided by participant (M). He argued that this factor has influenced the choice of materials. Instead of choosing materials that are suitable for college students, he is tempted to choose simple materials in order to satisfy the simple level of students. In order to handle this problem, the teacher selects the chapters and units that suit the students’ needs from the textbook.

Factors- ... first of all the poor language of the students... We develop our courses and we choose the material but when we come to the class we discover that the students have no background…

Effects- I have to choose materials that are below their level.

Handling factors- I am free to make changes in the chapters but nothing in the choice of books ... because the material we use does not satisfy the needs of the students.
Student Factors-students’ Preferences

The third category of challenges can be described in terms of students’ preferences (what they like and dislike). In this regard, four teachers (M, N, R, and W) criticized what their students like. First, participant (N) complained about students not being responsive to the materials that he had worked hard to prepare causing stress and confusion to the teacher. To solve this problem, the teacher has to be both realistic-by predicting the worse- and creative-by creating a supporting plan. The excerpt below demonstrates this challenge.

**Factors**-The ... challenge is that you prepare the materials and later on you discover that the students are not responding to you and they don’t like the material.

**Effects**-This makes confusion and stress to the teacher.

**Handling factors**-You need to predict things before you start ... Whenever you plan you need to have plan A beside plan B. Like when you are teaching something in the course, the syllabus of this course is plan A. Plan is the backup plan, the supporting plan that helps you to find the easiest way, the simplest way, and a more enjoyable way just to overcome the problem.

A second challenge in this respect is due to students’ focus on high marks. Three participants (A, M, s and W) complained about this issue. Participant (M) said that “The students are so much concerned about the marks”.

Accordingly, he has to be “more tolerant, lenient, and more generous in giving marks”, otherwise he will not find students registering for his sections. Likewise, participant (W) suffers from this phenomenon when he said that “All the students want full marks”. Definitely, this problem has its effects on exams. However, the teacher has solved this issue by preparing exams that are suitable for the majority of students and by giving “some items that are challenging and that can only be answered by the good students”.

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The third challenge under this category is due to students’ focus on memorization rather than understanding. Two participants (R and S) raised this issue reporting that “Our students don’t read by their own. They read something to memorise”. (R). Participant (S) associates this problem with the exam since the students don’t express their opinion, particularly in writing courses.

In short, this section has revealed an important finding that three issues relating to students: their culture, English language proficiency, and preferences constitute three key factors or challenges teachers confront when designing their courses in this particular context. The finding in this section can be considered as a response to the question why teachers prioritize students’ needs in designing their courses (Section 6.1 provides further discussion for the relationship between students’ needs and course design).

5.1.2.2 Departmental Factors

The second main category in this section involves factors that are ascribed to the policy and regulations at the departmental and institutional levels. From this category, a number of themes emerged that can be described in terms of different challenges. Below is a list of these themes:

- Selection of textbooks
- Compromising between departmental goals and students’ needs
- Absence of curriculum committee
- Class size
- Finding suitable materials
- Lack of teachers reflection

Selection of textbooks- According to the data results, the selection of topics constitutes the most influential challenge since five teachers focused on. In general, their criticism is based on the belief that the textbooks used for some courses are difficult, unsuitable and “not convincing” according to the level of students (S). For example, participant (L) complained that the textbook that
she was given to teach advanced communication "is for business communication...it is not for students majoring in English". A different criticism of textbooks was provided by (C) on the basis that the textbooks in this context are not integrated like the case in the USA. Accordingly, she is dissatisfied with a textbook focusing only on one skill such as speaking, writing, or reading.

Here we have a course only for oral skills...a course only for writing ....a course only for grammar, but at home we have an integrated course. The idea is about how I do the test for oral skills when I am not testing writing. If I am given a test for oral skills it must have a test for component writing...

**Compromising between the department’s needs and students’ needs**

The second challenge is highly serious since it reflects the struggling of some teachers (like A, N, and S) who try hard “to compromise between the department and the students” (N). Participant (W) agrees with (N) in this suffering saying that “it is so hard to satisfy the department and the students… There are some boundaries… We have mismatching between the students’ expectations and the course’s goals, content and materials”.

A similar example for this challenge is provided by participant (A) who also suffers from the conflict between the department’s goals and the students’ goals or expectations. His struggle is expressed in the few words below:

The department...demands goals. Their goals are different from the students’ goals. I am between satisfying my students, satisfying my department and satisfying myself... here the problem is that teachers cannot go beyond the learning objectives ... You are free within the framework. You cannot go beyond that one.

Another kind of this struggle is mentioned by participant (S) who tries to compromise the environment that is different from her beliefs. In this respect she reports that:
I design my courses and I feel they are good, but in implementing, I find that I have to compromise the environment...In addition to being a teacher, I am a councillor. It is another challenge. I always tell them that they should develop themselves.

**Absence of curriculum committee**- The third challenge is related to the absence of a specialized curriculum committee that is supposed to provide guidance to teachers. This issue was raised by two teachers (M and S). Teacher (S) strongly criticized her college when she said “Unfortunately, in this college, there is no guidance at all. Nobody will check on you. I am doing fine... but is this the right way?” Participant (M) supports her idea saying that there is “no representation of linguistic courses to make changes in these courses...the committee is not well qualified and they have no experience.”

Additionally, two participants (F and M) mentioned a third problem relating to the department curriculum which is offering many literature courses that are beyond the needs of our students. They draw on the rationale that the students need courses that improve their skills of communication rather than literary knowledge. Participant (M) proceeded further in his criticism saying that the committee concerned with course design is not qualified.

**Finding suitable materials** is a fourth challenge mentioned by one participant (S). In an attempt to reflect on her struggle with this challenge, she said that:

There are challenges like finding the suitable materials... most of the materials I use are not suitable. They are above the level of the students... In fact it is very difficult to find suitable material...sometimes it is difficult to adapt it to my students... If it is designed by an expert it is a piece of cake.

**The class size** is a fifth challenge raised by two participants (C and F) who warned that having big classes may handicap the process of teaching and learning.
Lack of teachers’ reflections is a sixth challenge that was considered by participant (S). Her criticism involves both her colleagues and the work context. For this she said “We don’t have the privilege of sitting together with our colleagues to discuss many things. ... The educational environment is not challenging”.

In summary, this section has introduced a range of challenges that teachers face reflecting the similarities and differences in their views. In spite of the variety of challenges, the teachers deal with them as problems having negative effects on designing and implementing courses.

5.2 Student Focus Group Discussion

This section is concerned with presenting the findings that emerged from the focus group discussions with the students. These findings are concerned with Question Three ‘How do students perceive the courses designed by their teachers?’ and Question Four ‘What challenges do students face in relation to course design?’ Therefore, the findings will be categorized in terms of those two questions through sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2, respectively.

5.2.1 How do students perceive EAP Courses Designed by Teachers?

To understand how students perceive the courses designed by teachers, they were asked this main question: What do you think of this course? And a number of subsequent questions (See Appendix 4). Each group was asked the same questions in relation to the investigated course (Essay Writing, General English, Introduction to Modern Grammar, and Study Skills). In response to the main question, a number of concepts and themes have been generated in terms of students’ evaluations of courses. In addition to the overall evaluation of the course, there was some analysis of the basic components of the course. Accordingly, each group discussion will involve two parts of discussions. The first part involves a general evaluation of a
particular course while the second part involves evaluation and analyses of the course components.

Before presenting the results in detail about each group, it is necessary to outline four major findings. The first finding is concerned with the diversity and inconsistency of students’ views within and across groups regarding the evaluation of a course and its components. The second finding is relating to the students’ evaluation of course design in terms of positive and negative. In this regard, two groups (General English Group, and Study Skills Group) were positive in their evaluation, while the other groups (Grammar Group and Writing Group) were negative. The third finding is about students’ concerns about course elements. Some students were concerned about methodology, while others were more concerned about course components like materials, topics, and methods of exams. The fourth finding which is the most important relates to the conflict between teachers’ views and students’ views with regard to course evaluation, components, and challenges. However, the focus in this section is on presenting students’ responses. Any comments regarding comparison between teachers and students’ beliefs will be introduced in chapter six.

5.2.1.1 General English Group Evaluation

Generally, the students of the General English Group evaluated their course design positively. This is evident in their description of the course in terms of being “a fun way to learn English”, “interesting”, “nice”, “inclusive”, and “useful”. Although they did not reflect on the course elements in detail, their positive evaluation included the content and goals of the course. For example, four students (A, E, M, and S) said that the course was useful since a. “it offered many grammar rules” (A); and b. It is interesting, simple and inclusive (S). The quote below shows how student (S) described the course:
It is a nice and inclusive course. It has a lot of grammar rules. .. I think it is very interesting, so we like it... "I learned much vocabulary...it is so simple... There is nothing to worry about when we study general English...

One student (R) however was different from her group since her focus was on other aspects of the course such as listening, communication, and how the course was a fun way to learn English. The quote below illustrates her evaluation:

I like this course and I think it is a fun way to learn English. It focuses a lot on listening...and I learned from it how to communicate with my friends and share with them their ideas... I liked it because we had some exercises ...It improved my listening.

With regard to whether the course helped them to satisfy their needs or not, three students (S), (A), and (E) provided positive responses on the basis that the course helped them to satisfy their linguistic needs through improving their communication and writing skills. For example, student (S) said “It helped me to improve my language a little bit. It helped me also to make complete sentences when I talk with my friends and teachers”. Similarly, student (E) said “It helped me to learn much vocabulary and to communicate with others”. On the contrary, two students (R) and (M) responded negatively saying that the course did not satisfy their needs because the focus was only on grammar and vocabulary.

When they were asked to analyse the course in terms of its components, the students provided neutral information-without evaluation. With regard to the materials, four students (A, E, M, and S) said that the teachers mainly depended on the textbooks and worksheets. Although not deeply, they analysed the methodology in terms of the style of the teacher and the style of teaching that were satisfying for them. However, student (R) provided further description of the teachers’ style saying “I liked the style of teaching because she was American and we learned from her appropriate pronunciation”. The teacher also used video materials in the classroom.
In spite of their positive evaluation of the course content and objectives, and the neutral evaluation of the methodology and materials selection, the students expressed their dissatisfaction of the topic selection. Four students were unhappy about the topics except one (S) who was satisfied with the topics. Those who were unhappy justified their dislikes in terms of several reasons. First, most of the topics were repeated since they previously took them in high school, and as such, they were perceived to be boring. Second, the topics were viewed to be simple, i.e. not suitable to their college level. Third, some topics were seen to not suit their culture. In this respect, student (R) provided a rather detailed justification stated in her quote below:

Some topics were not related to the course...Some topics we don’t experience in our life...so it is not useful for us to learn about these things...something that only happen in America, a meeting with a man and women...we want something that reflects our culture.

One student (S) was exceptional in her evaluation of topics. She justified her argument saying “I like the topics because they were very interesting and simple. They were very interesting because they provided a lot of information”.

5.2.1.2 Study Skills Group Evaluation

The Study Skills Group evaluated their course in both positive and negative terms. All the students were positive in their overall description of the course. They all admitted that the course was useful and important in terms of goals and content since it helped them improve their vocabulary, reading and writing skills. In addition, they liked the course because it was based on understanding, summarizing, and discussion rather than memorization. As to whether the course satisfied their needs or not, they all answered “yes” for reasons mentioned previously. The quote below from student (A) serves as an illustrative example of students’ positive evaluation:
It was a very nice course...I learned about how to make paraphrases, how to make notes. I liked it very much because it is not based on just memorization, but on understanding, so I got a lot of information.

In spite of their overall appreciation of the course, the students negatively criticised the basic elements of the course such as the materials development, topics selection, and methodology. For example, they all agreed that the materials development was limited by using textbooks and PowerPoint presentations. This was seen as not enough for them since they need other materials such as video materials and activities to improve their speaking and listening skills. Student (A) for example criticised the materials reporting that “I liked everything except the materials...The teacher always used PowerPoint which is very boring. We need video materials to make the class funny”. In addition to improving their speaking and listening skills, it seems that they need video materials for making fun in the classroom.

The methodology was also evaluated negatively since two students (F and I) said that there was no communication and no discussion in classroom to improve their speaking skills, and one student (S) complained about the method of memorization adopted for exams. However, the same student (S) provided positive evaluation when she said that “the teacher made groups of discussion”. With regard to their analysis of topics selection two students (F and I) admitted that the topics were interesting and useful since they “learned new vocabulary from them” (F) in addition to helping them in” writing and reading” (F). Two students (A and S), on the other hand, criticised the topics or being not new and not important.

5.2.1.3 Grammar Group Evaluation

The students in Grammar Group provided fluctuating views between-positive and negative. Three students confirmed that the course is important and useful. However, they didn’t like the course because of certain reasons such
as the classroom methodology, the selection of the textbook, and the level of the selected topics that were beyond their college level.

(O) “The course is useful to some extent...because we learned some rules...but the focus was on the frame of the language, not its usage.”
(L) “The course is important, but we didn’t understand from the teacher. He didn’t explain well and the book was complicated…”

(S) “I think that Grammar had a huge burden on the students and the teacher was not really helping, like the same routine every day.”

(D) “Overall the course is useful, but we had problems in teaching and selection of topics.”

From the quotes above, we can understand that their positive evaluation involves the usefulness and importance of the course since it helped them learn grammatical rules. However, their negative evaluation involves several reasons: a. “the focus was on the frame of the language, not its usage” (O), students’ dissatisfaction with the methods of teaching (L); c. the book is complicated” (L); d. problems with the selection of topics”

When the students were further asked about evaluating the materials, topics, and methodology, all the students responded negatively. Their dislikes of the course was justified by certain reasons. First, in terms of materials, they argued that it was restricted on using the textbook and PowerPoint. There was no classroom practice, no activities, and no video materials. Second, the textbook and topics were simple-beyond their college level- and redundant. Third, they were unhappy about the methodology since the dependence was on reading, explanation of rules by the teacher, and memorization. Accordingly, the students were deprived from the chance of classroom participation and discussion.
5.2.1.4 Writing Group Evaluation (A, L, E, I)

In response to the evaluation of the Writing course, unfortunately, all the students were unhappy about the course. They started their evaluation with negative criticisms and reflections. Mainly, their criticism involved methodology, materials, and topics selection. However, there was a visible focus on the methodology of implementing the course represented by the authority of the teacher in class. In this case, student (E) said: “In my opinion, the teacher was authority since he selected the materials without communicating with us... The teacher was just explaining without giving us the chance to participate...The class was boring”. Another example is provided by student (A) when she argued that: “The course was not satisfying...The teacher didn’t give the students the chance to participate in class in order to improve their language”. Then they confirmed that this resulted in a boring classroom with lack of students’ participation and interaction.

Materials and topics selection were also analyzed negatively. The materials selection was criticized for being restricted on using PowerPoint and text books. With regard to topics selection, all students described the topics in a negative way as being redundant and traditional (A), not challenging (E), and simple.

However, in response to whether the course helped them satisfy their needs or not, the students were positive and confirmed that it was useful. Three of them (E, L, and A) confirmed that the course helped them in writing paragraphs, learning vocabulary, writing the hook, and organizing the paragraph. In addition, two students (E and A) confirmed that the practice of writing helped them not only to improve their language, but how to write confidently.

In conclusion, the results shown in this section in comparison to the results shown in section 5.1.1 that are concerned with teachers’ beliefs raise a
crucial issue that can be explained in terms of a conflict between teachers and students' views. In section 5.1.1 the sample of teachers indicated that the element of students' needs is the first priority in designing courses. However, the students sample indicated, although not directly, that the courses they study are not based on their needs. The results also revealed that these students have their own agendas in learning that in turn have certain reflections on their views concerning course design (for further discussion see section 6.2.2 concerned with the differences between teachers and students' views).

5.2.2 Challenges Faced by Students

This section is concerned with exploring what kind of challenges the students face as a result of attending courses designed by their teachers. Additionally, it explores how these challenges affect students' learning. To gain rich data, the students were asked these questions 'Have you faced any problems and challenges in this course? If yes what are they? How did these challenges and problems affect your learning?'

In response to those questions all the students admitted that they had many challenges described in terms of problems having negative impacts on their English language learning. However, there is a visible discrepancy among the descriptions of the challenges within the group and across the groups. Overall the challenges are due to three main factors: students' level of English proficiency, aspects of the designed courses, and the classroom methodology. Accordingly, they fall into three categories described in terms of those factors as in Figure 5.4 below. The discussion that follows will present findings of each group supported by certain quotes and a summary of findings.
General English Group- The general English group students referred to two types of problems. One type relates to their weakness in vocabulary, writing, and spelling (A, E, and R). One of students (E) ascribed this problem to the lack of providing “exercises about writing paragraphs and essays”. The second type relates to course design, particularly the selection of topics that are redundant and beyond their level. Two students (R and S) complained about this issue and one of them (S) said "I have a challenge that it is repeating the same topics. I did not like that because it made me feel bored". From this, we can understand that this issue had negative consequences on their motivation in classroom.

Lack of providing exercises for writing \[\Rightarrow\] weakness in vocabulary, grammar, and spelling

Redundancy and simplicity of topics \[\Rightarrow\] boring classroom
Grammar Group-The grammar group also referred to different types of challenges that were due to several reasons. First, the dependence is on the method of memorization rather than understanding. One student (O) raised this issue arguing that they “need to understand the material not only memorize it”. Second, the method of teaching that was traditional “like spoon feeding. There was no way for discussing the material just memorizing it” (S). Similarly, students (D) complained about the method of teaching saying that she had “a problem with the teacher and method of teaching. He was boring, just reading without explaining”. Third, the dependence was on “theoretical and formal…no assignments and no activities”. Another student complained about the exams, but in a different way saying that “the exams were difficult”. Fourth, the choice of textbooks was not suitable. In this respect, the data show two different views. One student (L) complained about the book for being “complicated”, while the other one (D) said that the “textbook was simple”.

Dependence on memorization → lack of understanding
Traditional methods of teaching → boring classroom
Dependence on written exams → students’ stress
Using complicated/simple books → negative effects on understanding

Study Skills Group-The study skills group ascribed their challenges to the exams and topics of the course. Two students (A and I) referred to two issues that made the exam difficult for them such as the method of memorization, no revision provided by the teacher (A), students’ being given a lot of materials for the exam, and no time for preparation (I). One student (F), however, was different since her challenges were due to the difficulty of the topics that affected negatively the process of understanding the course.

Method of memorization, no revision, a lot of materials → difficult exam
Choice of topics → negative effects on understanding
**Writing Group** - The writing group students were not so much different from the other groups. Their challenges can be ascribed to two factors. The first problem related to the lack of cooperation by the teacher (E) and lack of motivation provided by the teacher (A). The second problem related to the students’ level of language and the teacher. The language problems involved their poor vocabulary and grammar which normally handicap writing paragraphs and essays.

... I think I have a lot of mistakes in grammar and vocabulary because I was not given a lot of vocabulary and grammar...The teacher does not give us motivation but he laughs at us if we make mistakes.

Lack of teacher’s corporation and motivation —> negative effects on Learning

Lack of providing exercises —> poor vocabulary, grammar, and paragraph writing

It is important to close this section with raising certain issues that need to be discussed in detailed through chapter six and chapter seven—the section on implication. Dependent on the categorization of challenges above, we understand that students confronted several challenges in association with these courses. However, not all challenges can be categorized as consequence of the design of a particular course. Those challenges that are consequence of course design are associated with two aspects, the selection of the topics or course content and the selection of materials including the use of textbooks. Based on students’ discussion across all groups, we understand that most of the challenges are associated with methodology that is with the teaching style and classroom environment or motivation. This finding raises a crucial issue that can be explained in terms of the relationship between designing a course and implementing a course. This issue will be discussed in detail under the theme of differences between teachers and students’ views (6.2.2).
5.3 Teachers and Students' Suggestions for Improving EAP Course Design

One of the basic questions this thesis seeks to answer is to know what suggestions the participants (teachers and students) offer for the improvement of course design in this particular context. The aim of this section is to understand how teachers and students perceive the improvement of course design as course designers and course recipients, respectively. The purpose of understanding participants' suggestions contributes to building up a holistic picture about the investigated topic. In addition, the gained information helps in providing interpretations to be employed for the purpose of implications. This section is organized into two subsections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 concerned with teachers and students' suggestions, respectively.

5.3.1 Teachers Suggestions for Improving EAP Course Design

When teachers were asked whether they have any suggestions for the improvement of course design in this college, they provided a variety of suggestion. Behind the analysis of the synthesis of views in this regard are three important issues. The first issue is that course design is a difficult task that cannot be manageable by teachers only. Therefore, most of teachers' suggestions emphasized the role of the department and faculty for providing professional support for course design, particularly in relation to the development of goals and objectives and the selection of materials and content. The second issue reflects teachers' focus on the need for creating team work for negotiating and discussing issues relating to course design. They portrayed course design as shared responsibility between the department and teachers. The third issue is critical since it is related to the role of teachers in the improvement of course design. The results revealed that in comparison to teachers' focus on external support, there was little focus on their role in enhancing course design. A few teachers, four out of
nine focused on enhancing their knowledge, skills, and practice throughout programs of professional development.

Generally, teachers' suggestions fall into two categories, suggestions to be considered externally, at the departmental/institutional level and suggestions to be considered internally, at the individual/teacher level. The discussion that follows will present the emergent themes under those categories supported by quotes picked up from the data. For further illustration the section ends up with figure 5.1.3.

5.3.1.1: Suggestions at the Departmental/Institutional Level

At the departmental/institutional level, the majority of teachers (A, F, L, M, R, S and W) suggested that in order to design effective courses, teachers need support from the faculty and department. This support involves developing a committee of teachers who are “highly qualified” (F) and “specialized in curriculum design” (M). They justified their argument by several reasons. The first reason is to discuss how to set goals and aims as two interrelated and essential elements in designing courses, and how to approach them. This is suggested by one participant (L) through her quote below:

If I were the chair of the department, I would get people, professors sit together, first to set their aims and goals and then discuss how they would approach these goals…. I would encourage the team work; we need coherent curriculum development.

Participant (A) also focused on the importance of the development of goals by the curriculum committee. His suggestion is very important since he raised a new issue (at least in our context) related to setting objectives and goals in accordance with the marketing demands. The quote below supports this comment:

We should see what the market wants…My point is that every year…the market changes rapidly… The Department should revise
the course to suit the marketing. The academic council needs to be familiar with this goal.

The second reason is provided by two participants (R and S) who call for a committee for revising and approving the courses that have been already designed and prepared by their teachers. In this case (R) said that “We need coordination, we need people to look into what you have done…” Similarly, (S) suggests that:

At the first stage, a staff member designs a course, another staff reviews it, and then it should be approved by the committee...There should be a curriculum committee … to discuss together our academic issues.

The third reason is to examine to what extent the materials and textbooks used for teaching our students are culturally acceptable or teachable. This is of high importance since it deals with an issue that is missing in our academic context. This suggestion is offered by two participants (S and W). In this regard, participant (S) argued that she is against the idea of using textbooks designed by foreigners.

The cultural factor is important. The textbooks are designed by foreigners...They miss something for our students. They underestimate our students. They don't challenge them. I think there should be experts from the Arabic culture who are taking part in designing textbooks.

Similarly participant (W) suggested designing courses based on the culture of the students taking into consideration their needs and levels. Consider the excerpt below:

I hope that those who are working in this area make a deal with each country. For example, those who work in Oman should make a committee to design courses according to the culture of the country. They must design a specific curriculum based on the students’ needs, level, and culture...to avoid the mismatches between the course content and the culture.
The fourth reason of establishing a curriculum committee is to discuss with its counterpart, the curriculum committee in the Ministry of Higher Education to replace the literature courses such as Drama, Novels, etc. with linguistic courses. One participant suggested this on the basis that “Literature courses don’t help students improve their language skills”. On the contrary, linguistic courses such as Writing Essays, Grammar, Morphology, and the like help improve students’ English proficiency.

The fifth reason is to “encourage the team work” and create an atmosphere of socialization, coordination and reflections among teachers (L).

A second type of suggestions at the institutional level is provided by teacher (C) who stated that teachers must be given more time “to relax and build up the course in a good way”. She also suggests recruiting more teachers to reduce the load and stress on teachers.

I think the teacher should have time to build up the course and make the students use the language... We need time to relax to build up the course in a good way and achieve a good reputation. We need more teachers and more time.

5.3.1.2: suggestions at the Individual Level

At the individual level, four participants (A, L, N, and R) suggested that teachers must be aware of two issues, course adaptation and professional development. Awareness of course adaptation involves taking into account decisions such as flexibility, suitability, usefulness, and modification when designing a course. Regarding flexibility, adaptation, and suitability, participant (A) stated that a course must be flexible in terms of selecting “topics, activities, and techniques”. In terms of suitability, the course must suit the level of the students and in terms of adaptation, teachers have to change continuously. Consider the quote below.
When I prepare a new course, it should be more flexible in terms of topics, activities and techniques. We can suit the course to the level of our students. We have to change every time...we can update ourselves in teaching... every year the teacher with colleagues need to sit together and modify the course.

Participant (R) is similar to (A) in his belief of suitability of course design. He suggested that "If I design a course. It should be suitable to the level of students ... We have to use a particular textbook, but we must select materials that are suitable".

In terms of the suitability, participant (L) offered the same suggestion that is suiting the materials according to the level of students. In addition, she raised another issue that relates to suiting teachers according to the level of students. For this she suggests the following:

The professors should be acquainted with the level, for example, if I teach high level, I should discuss with others... and share their deducted materials to create assignments... Native speakers should teach advanced levels.

Participant (N) also provided another set of recommendations such as designing useful courses, satisfying the department and students’ needs, considering methodology and classroom motivation, and sharing the responsibility by the parents and department. This is stated in the following quote.

You need to think about something useful, you need to think about methodology, you need to thing about satisfying the department and the students... It is shared responsibility, department... parents and curriculum committee responsibility.

With regard to teachers’ professional development, the data show that only two participants (A and S) suggested that teachers need to participate in seminars and conferences. “There should be a kind of seminars and workshops to share our ideas”(S). Participant (A) also suggests that “We
need seminars … If there is compulsory training and courses, the things will be better. Teachers need to participate in seminars and conferences and workshops and training courses”.

**Figure 5.5: Teachers’ suggestions for Improving Course Design**

- **Suggestions at the teacher level**
  - Course adaptation
  - Flexibility, suitability, usefulness
- **Suggestions at the department level**
  - Enhancing teachers’ Professional development
  - Developing a qualified curriculum committee
  - Providing teachers with more time
  - Recruiting qualified teachers

### 5.3.2 Students’ Suggestions for Improving EAP Courses

The data analysis in this section addresses the second part of Question Five concerned with exploring students’ suggestions for improving course design. In response to the question “Do you have any suggestions for teachers in this college for improving the process of course design?” The students offered a variety of suggestions reflecting on their perspectives. Analysis of data shows that there is a visible variation among students’ suggestions. Nevertheless it is possible to categorize them into three categories: suggestions at the pedagogical level, suggestions at the course design level, and suggestions at
the departmental level. Each of these categories will be outlined through the next discussion illustrated by certain direct quotes. Figure 5.6 provides a brief summary of these suggestions.

**Figure 5.6: Students’ Suggestions for Improving EAP Courses**

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### Category One: Students’ Suggestions at the Pedagogical Level

Examining the data closely, we can notice that the students in three groups (General English, Grammar, and Study Skills) gave priority to the pedagogical aspects for improving course design. Their focus was on teaching and teacher’s style. Within the scope of curriculum design, those are considered as the key means of practicing course design (yalden, 1987; Nunan, 1988). With regard to the teaching style or classroom methodology, the students...
offered a variety of suggestions. I was struck by this quotation “we need a
different type of methodology in class that helps students to improve their
English” (A in Writing Group).

The focus on methodology was quite obvious in only three groups: grammar,
writing, and general English. This is due to the nature of those courses that
demands much practice in class. I have selected some quotes from each
group representing a particular course. Below is a list of students’ quotes
under the course heading.

Students’ Suggestions of the Grammar Course

(O) “The grammar course should be taught inductively.”

(O) “The students should be exposed to both explicit and implicit rules and
their
    application in life situations”

(L) “We want discussion… in class.”

(D) “We need practice in the class in order not to be shy.”

(D) “We need activities in the classroom.”

(J) “We want communication in the class.”

(S) “The teacher should not only focus on memorization.”

(S) “The students should learn by themselves.

Students’ Suggestions of the General English Group

(R) "We need more exercises because they help us to remember information
and students can use them easily.

(R) “We need a lot of topics, exercises on vocabulary and more practice in
classroom.”
Students' Suggestions of the Writing Group

(A) “We need activities in the classroom.”
(E) “The teacher should not only focus on memorization.”
(L) “The students should learn by themselves.

At the teachers’ level, only the students of the writing group offered a set of suggestions. They need more guidance and motivation from the teacher in addition to being open to students’ need and desires.

(L) “We need guidance from the teacher”
(M) “We need motivation.”
(E) “The teacher should be close to the students... He should understand from the students what they need and what they are interested in.”
(A) “We really want from the teacher to correct our mistakes.”

Category Two: Students’ Suggestions at the Course Design Level

At the course design level, the students offered few suggestions focusing on three elements of course design: topics selection, materials design, and methods of assessment. With regard to the selection of topics, they suggested that they need advanced topics that are suitable to their college level. In relation to materials selection, they focused on using video materials along with PowerPoint presentations and textbooks. Below are several suggestions offered by the Study skills Group:

(I) “We need integrated books for grammar.”
(I) “We need high level material, not school material.”
(F) “We need video materials.”
(F) “The students need video clips in order not to forget the information.”
(S) “The textbook should be simple and colorful.”
(A) “We need small books not thick because we don’t have time to prepare for the exam.”
Also, few suggestions were offered for improving the method of assessment. There are two types of suggestions. One type focused on types of methods of assessment. Some students prefer assignments and projects for assessment because “they give students self-autonomy”. However, other students prefer the idea of written exams”. The other type focused on the level of exam as some students prefer “easy exams”. One student said “One chapter is enough for the exam because we forget the information before the exam.”

**Category Three: Students’ Suggestions at the Departmental Level**

The third category involves two types of suggestions that are related to the department decisions. One type of suggestions is concerned with grouping students according to their levels for improving the learning purposes.

(R) “...Weak students should not be mixed with high level students”

(E) “The department should divide the students into three groups high, mid, and weak...It would be better...to deal with each group separately...”

The second type of suggestion is offered by one student who said “We should take levels from the foundation to improve our writing”. It seems that the students need more courses at the foundation level before joining the department.

Appendix 10 provides a summary of all findings organised in relation to each question in a form of table.
CHAPTER SIX
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with discussing the findings that were reported in chapter five. To help guide the discussion, this chapter presents the findings in association with the research questions. For the purpose of discussion and implication, the findings will be discussed in a way that links between teachers and students’ perspectives regarding each particular issue the study seeks to answer (thoughts, challenges, and suggestions). Accordingly, it is organized into three main sections. Section one is concerned with discussing both teachers and students’ perspectives about the process of designing EAP courses. The second section discusses the findings concerned with the challenges faced by teachers and students. The third section is devoted to discussing the suggestions offered by teachers and students for the improvement of course design.

6.1 Teachers and Students’ Perspectives on Course Design

This section provides a reflective discussion of teachers and students’ perspectives regarding course design through sections 6.1.1 and 6.2.2, respectively.

6.1.1 How do Teachers Design their EAP courses?

This section is framed in a form of three major themes and subthemes emerging from the analysis of data concerned with the question above.
Theme One: Course Design is a Matter of Prioritizing Learning Elements

One of the key themes regarding the question above is that teachers conceptualize course design as a matter of prioritizing the most important elements in order to build up the whole course.

This theme leads us to draw two interpretations. The first interpretation is that course design is not a static or standard process as has been portrayed in the frameworks and models of course design as shown in the literature review chapter. Rather, teachers portrayed course design as a dynamic process offering teachers and course designers more flexibility regarding the starting point and the mechanism of articulating the elements of a course. Based on teachers’ perspectives, the starting point is determined by the importance of the elements. The results of analysis have shown four priorities that can be arranged sequentially (according to the number of teachers who cited them) as follows: students’ needs, learning objectives, methodology, and conceptualizing content.

The second interpretation is that there is no linear mechanism when articulating the elements. The teachers in this case study agree with Graves regarding the issue of sequencing the components of a particular course. Prioritizing elements confirms that teachers don’t follow a linear or logical order when sequencing the learning elements as was recommended by some models of course design such as the “Waterfall” model (further details regarding this issue are provided in section 3.3 concerned with principles of course design).

Theme Two: Students’ Needs as a Key Element in Course Design

The major theme in the whole data analysis is that the teachers in this setting considered students’ needs as the key element in every stage of course design. This finding has several interpretations. First, it reflects teachers’
awareness of students’ needs as an essential component and factor in the process of course design. The majority of teachers believe that students’ needs must be considered initially in order to determine the articulation of the other basic elements of a course like materials, objectives, and assessment methods. Another importance of students’ needs lies in its contribution to making the course more relevant to students, as Graves states “a more focused and responsive course” (2000: 99).

Second, within this finding, it has been noticed that in this setting there is no official procedure for the assessment of students’ needs neither at the institution level, nor at the teacher level. Rather, teachers do it individually based on their beliefs and critical reflections at the course level. This individuality in addressing students’ needs has resulted in a variety of evaluations and analyses of students’ needs reflecting teachers’ various focuses. For example, some teachers focused on students' language proficiency level, while others focused on their preferences, and a few of them focused on their cultural background. Accordingly, we can interpret that in this context the notion of students’ needs is shaped and influenced by teachers’ beliefs and both are two interrelated factors in course design. Teachers’ beliefs and perspectives as has been discussed in the literature review chapter play a great role in course design. However, in relation to the assessment of students’ needs, many researchers (like Graves, 2000; Richards, 2007; Dudley Evans and ST. Johns, 2004) recommend adopting more principled and designed procedures such as a survey questionnaire and interviews. The rationale behind this is to engage students directly to the process of assessment rather than relying on only teachers’ intuitions (Davies, 2006; Conrad, 1999). Engaging students in this process helps avoid troubles such as conflict or mismatch between teachers and students’ perceptions.

From the other hand, the variety in teachers’ analyses of students’ needs leads to a third interpretation that these teachers take into account the two important types of students’ needs, the objective and the subjective needs.
Analysis of students’ cultural background and their language proficiency indicate teachers’ concerns with objective needs that stand for the ‘target needs’ represented by ‘necessities’ and ‘lacks’ (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). In addition, teachers’ concerns with students’ interests and preferences indicate their concerns with students’ subjective needs. Taking into account students’ needs both the objective and the subjective is a crucial issue that helps teachers to avoid the risk of having courses that conflict with what students need or like (for further details see section 3.4.3).

As reported above, teachers’ views in this respect correspond to the theoretical views of many specialists in curriculum design (like Graves, 2000; Richards 2007; Dudely-Evans and ST John 2004; Nunan, 1988; Flowerdew, J. and Peacock, 2001) who believe that in order to produce successful courses, the teachers must play a crucial role in adjusting their teaching and selection of materials to their students’ needs and interests.

**Theme three: Articulation of the Basic Elements of Course Design based on Teachers’ Beliefs and Document analysis**

**Developing Learning Objectives**

As has been stated in the literature review, goals and objectives are two interrelated dimensions in curriculum planning (Richards, 2007, Brown, 1995). The case is also the same in the curriculum of this study. There is a clear distinction between goals and objectives. The context, where the study takes place, has six goal statements labeled as “General Students Learning Goals” and a general goal statement for each course (see Table 5.1 and Appendix 1). They are both stated by the department based on the policy of the institution. This means that the teachers have no role in determining the goals, either at the departmental level, or at the course level.
At the course level, there is some flexibility for teachers in formulating the learning objectives, and most of them prefer to be engaged in developing the objectives of a course. Their decision is based on the reason that they are dissatisfied with the objectives set up by the department and as such they have to develop the objectives in accordance with students’ needs. This view corresponds to Brown’s argument about developing goals and objectives on the basis of students’ needs and situation analysis (1995).

The document analysis data, on the other hand, added another theme relating to the format and the department criteria for writing the learning objectives. It seems that the teachers in this setting have to adopt the framework of Bloom’s et.al., Taxonomy in phrasing the learning objectives of a course. This is represented by selecting an action verb for each learning objective. However, the content of the objectives is determined by teachers in alignment with students’ needs.

**Conceptualizing Content Based on Teachers’ Decisions**

Having analyzed teacher data, we have noticed that the teachers in this case study have a role in selecting the content of their courses based on students’ needs. Although the data based on document analysis have shown that the teachers adopt a course book for choosing the course content (as in Figure 5.2) their responses indicate that they have the flexibility to not follow exactly the same topics stated on the course plan. From this finding we draw a conclusion that there is a relationship between a course content and the element of students’ needs. Teachers’ view supports Nation and Macalister’s view that needs analysis is directed mainly at the goals and content of a course (2010).

The second part of teachers’ perspectives regarding the selection of content involves the range of decisions made by the teachers that can be described in terms of practicality, suitability, simplicity, familiarity, variety, and alignment.
The rationale behind making these decisions is to adapt the content of a course in accordance with their students’ needs. Nation and Macalister encourage the idea of making decisions in developing the goals and content of the course. In this respect, they state that “Making sensible, well justified decisions about content is one of the most important parts of curriculum design. If poor content is chosen, then excellent teaching and learning result in a poor return for learning effort” (2010: 71).

The decisions of adaptation, suitability, familiarity, and alignment made by teachers have several interpretations. One interpretation is that in this setting there is a strong relationship between the selection of topics and students’ involvement in classroom practices. This raises a crucial issue that the nature and type of topics affect the methodology in classroom throughout encouraging students’ participation, discussion, and interaction. Accordingly, teachers made these decisions in response to this relationship as strategies for encouraging classroom practices. In addition, teachers’ responses through these decisions reflect their concerns and awareness of this relationship which is an essential issue in the pedagogy of English language classroom (Richards, 2007).

Going through the decisions taken by the teachers in this case study leads us to a second interpretation that these teachers, whether consciously or unconsciously, employ the principle of contextualization in course design. Contextualization is considered by the literature on pedagogy as an important strategy and an important factor in course design. It contributes to adjusting topics and materials to be contextually suitable to the classroom taking into consideration socio-cultural and political dimensions (Block, 1991, Graves, 2000, Richards, 2007, Moghaddas, 2013).

The third interpretation is concerned with the diversity of decisions taken by teachers with regard to selecting the content of a particular subject or course. As has been indicated above and in the section concerned with data analysis
(5. 1.1.2) not all teachers have the same perspective about conceptualising course content due to their various focuses. Logically, differences in teachers’ perspectives result in different practices in classroom. This presumes that if the same course is taught by more than one teacher, students will not have the same learning experiences. For example, we expect that the students, who take a course with the teacher focusing on simplicity, will be exposed to topics at the simple level. The same expectation might be applicable to other classrooms administered by teachers with different views and decisions.

**Developing Materials Based on Mediation between the Textbook and Supplementary Materials**

The results show that teachers in general use the textbook prescribed by the department. However, they believe that using only textbooks for delivering a course is inadequate. For this reason all teachers except one said that they mediate between the textbook and other supplementary materials such as PowerPoint presentations, video materials, and visiting websites. They believe that such mediation of materials helps achieve several purposes such as alignment, satisfying students’ needs, and adaptation. (for further description of those strategies see section 5.1.1.2). From teachers’ perspectives, satisfying students’ needs is the main reason behind the use of supplementary materials.

Based on what is reported above we understand that for these teachers material development is not merely a matter of using textbooks. Rather it is a matter of making decisions and options in order to present materials that go in alignment with goals and objectives and serve to satisfy students’ needs. This is compatible to Graves’s belief stating that “...an important aspect of materials development is making choices... you need to make choices based on what you want your students to learn according to your goals and objectives and your syllabus focus” (2000:165).
The conclusions reached from teachers’ perspectives regarding the use of supplementary materials can be summarized in three points. First, in line with advice from the literature review, the only reliance on the textbook for delivering a course is viewed by these teachers as having disadvantages, whereas the use of supplementary materials has advantages. Although teachers didn’t criticize directly the idea of having solely reliance on textbooks, we can understand through their comments on supplementary materials that they view this dependence as likely to be inadequate to fill in the gaps in course design, particularly in relation to content selection, goals and objectives, and students’ needs.

The advantages of using supplementary materials are represented in the reasons mentioned earlier such as alignment, adaptation, and satisfying students’ needs. In this respect, teachers’ views are supported by specialists’ views in curriculum design (like Tomlinson, 2003; Dudley-Evans and ST. Johns, 2004; Richards, 2007; McGrath, 2002, Blok, 1991) who encourage teachers to create their own materials or at least combine textbooks and other sources of materials. In addition, teachers’ use of supplementary materials supports the idea of “providing variety” of materials in classroom learning (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 2004). Variety is important, particularly in ESP or EAP classroom setting in order to avoid “the danger of the ESP class becoming rather a dry affair that fails to motivate learners” (ibid: 177).

Additionally, teachers’ decision of using supplementary materials signals the importance of contextualization in course design (Block, 1991). As has been stated in the literature review (and in the previous section concerned with topic selection) that contextualization is viewed as a crucial factor in materials development. With regard to material development, contextualization has the advantage of “relevance” where materials are directly relevant to students and institutional needs and that reflect local content, issues, and concerns” (Richards, 2007: 261).
6.1.2 Students’ Perspectives Regarding Courses Designed by Teachers

Among the goals that this study seeks to find out is to know how students conceptualize the courses designed by their teachers. The analysis of student data revealed several themes and findings in this regard. Overall, their perspectives involved a general evaluation of particular courses and a specific analysis of the basic components of courses, represented in Theme One and Theme Two respectively.

Theme One: Students’ Evaluation of the Courses Designed by Teachers

The results show that students’ evaluations of particular courses varied between positive and negative. Their evaluation was done on the basis of whether the course was useful and satisfying or not. This finding reveals that there is diversity of perspectives across and within groups. Across the groups the diversity was evident in their overall evaluations of the courses. It seems that the type of the course is an influential factor in determining students’ perspectives and beliefs. This is expected as each course has certain goals and requirements. Another factor relates to the students’ focus on particular elements of a course. For example, the groups who were negative in their evaluation, Grammar and Writing groups, focused on methodology and teacher’ style, while the General English and Study Skills groups focused on the selection of topics and materials.

Within the group, the diversity was also noticed. In their general evaluation of the concerned courses, the students in each group affirmed that the course was useful and helpful in learning English. However, in their specific evaluation and analysis of components, the data have shown many negative comments. For example, the Study Skills Group students were positive in their evaluation of the course content, yet in their evaluation of the topics they were negative on the basis that the topics were beyond their advanced level.
The same was evident in the responses of the Writing Group. The data explored several examples about this case.

**Theme Two: Students’ Analysis of Course components**

In their analysis of particular courses, the students focused on two key components, materials development and selection of content.

**Students’ Perspectives on the Content of a Course**

The results of the course content analysis revealed that the majority of students in all groups didn’t show much interest in the topics selected for the concerned courses. Their objection is based on the reason that the level of the selected topics didn’t suit their college level. This finding reflects students’ awareness of the need to be exposed to topics or content at a more advanced level in order to be able to approach the proficiency of English language and the subject matter.

Students’ focus on the level of the language proficiency is one of the basic aspects within the concept of students’ needs that is considered as a key element when designing a language course. In this regard, Graves (2000) points out that the level of the learners’ language proficiency is an important aspect in needs analysis. It is necessary to know students’ level of proficiency in all language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and about the language components such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Graves further states that “This information can help to make choices about the kinds of texts to use, which skills to develop, which elements of grammar to emphasize and so on” (2000:103). Similarly, Nation and Macalister point out that “the content should suit the proficiency level of the learners”, “the content take into account what learners want”, and “the content should be what learners need” (2010: 70).
This finding raises a crucial issue regarding the various focuses on the selection of the course content by teachers and students. While students focused on the proficiency level of the content, teachers focused on students’ preferences. This goes back to the argument stated in section (6.1.1, Theme Two) about teachers’ only reliance on their intuitions and perspectives regarding the assessment of students’ needs. The issue of not engaging students directly into the process via procedures like a survey questionnaire or interviews resulted in selecting the content for particular courses that don’t suit all students’ needs, at least from the perspectives of students.

**Students’ Perspectives on Materials Design**

With regard to the category of materials analysis, across all groups the results demonstrated the students’ dissatisfaction with materials design. Their dissatisfaction was based on the argument that they were not exposed to a variety of materials, particularly authentic materials.

Students’ views on materials design correspond to the views of experts in materials design (like Richards, 2007; Dudley-Evans and ST. Johns, 2004; Tomlinson, 2003) who offered some guidelines or criteria to be taken into account when selecting materials (see section 3.4.5). Generally, the guidelines involve providing materials that are motivating, supporting the learning process, and designed in alignment with the goals and objectives of a course (Dudley-Evans and ST. Johns, 2004; Tomlinson, 2003).

In addition, students’ interests in video materials indicate their awareness of the importance of authentic materials that are highly recommended in EFL settings for pedagogical and cultural considerations (Richards, 2007).
6.2 Challenges faced by Teachers and Students

This section aims at discussing the findings concerned with the challenges faced by teachers when designing EAP courses and the challenges faced by the students when studying the courses. It also aims at reaching a conclusion about the challenges and their impacts on course design based on both teachers and students' perspectives.

6.2.1 Challenges Faced by Teachers and their Effects on course Design

Teachers described the factors affecting course design in terms of challenges that can be divided into two major categories: Student Factor and Institution Factor. Teachers appeared to be highly critical affirming that those challenges have negative effects on course design.

Finding One: Student Factor

The majority of teachers considered students in this context as a serious challenge with a specific focus on their English level proficiency, cultural background, and preferences. In what follows is a discussion of each of these challenges.

A Range in Students' Abilities Regarding English proficiency

The majority of teachers reflected on their struggling with teaching students with a range of abilities in studying courses designed for a particular tertiary level. The problem is that not all students are distributed according to their English proficiency level. The negative effects of this problem were observed in every stage of course design, particularly in the selection of the course content, material design, methodology, and even in the selection of courses, as has been argued by participant (F). This finding raised a crucial issue that must be taken into consideration when designing EAP courses at the higher
education level. The issue concerns the relationship between students’ language proficiency, their academic achievement, and course design.

In this case study, teachers are aware of the need to moderate planning a course to accommodate students’ lower level of English proficiency. Accordingly, teachers made a decision of adaptation in all stages of course design in order to adjust the course to those students with English low proficiency. Overall, the idea of adapting the course in terms of simplicity and flexibility raises a crucial issue relating to the proficiency of curriculum design at the higher education level. Rationally, adapting or modifying the EAP courses in accordance with the low level of students’ language proficiency is a challenge as it leads to designing EAP courses that don’t meet the recent requirements of globalization and modern technology. Recently, the sector of higher education in many countries has witnessed certain developments and reformations in order to meet the requirements of the globalization and the modern technology (Diamond, 2008). Diamond focuses on preparing students for future careers pointing out that “Business and industry leaders increasingly call for graduates who can speak and write effectively, have high-quality interpersonal and creative thinking skills…and can work effectively with individuals from different cultures and background” (2008:x). Due to the status of English as the global language, the field of TESOL has undergone certain changes across all its aspects, curriculum development, classroom methodology, teacher development and students’ assessments. Accordingly, a new pedagogical model is needed to accommodate the case of English as a means of international and intercultural communication” (Alptekin, 2000: 63). This requires further development and updating EAP curriculum or course design in order to enable learners to use language effectively for the purposes of study and future careers.
Students’ Preferences / Interests

The second major challenge was attributed to students’ preferences such as their focus on getting high marks with little attention on learning and academic growth and their focus on memorization rather than critical thinking. The teachers considered such preferences as challenges because they enforced them to design courses that are beyond the college level of students. Moreover, they influenced even the policy and style of teachers pushing them to behave in a way that contradicts their professional beliefs and experiences.

Students’ interest is one of the basic aspects within the concept of learners’ needs (Graves, 2000; Richards, 2007, Dudley Evans and ST. Johns, 2004). According to Graves, learners' interests involve “What kinds of the topics or issues they are interested in? What kinds of personal and professional experience they do? The importance of taking into account this information about students’ interests is “to help teachers to gear the course towards students’ experience and interests” (2000: 103).

The finding of students’ interests raises a crucial issue concerning what is called ‘objective information’ and ‘subjective information’ about students (Brindely, 1989; Graves, 2000). Objective information involve facts about students such as their language level and what they need they course for, while subjective information involve attitudes and expectations in relation to what and how they will learn. Graves recommends teachers who are involved in designing their courses to take into consideration both kinds of information, objective as well as subjective. In this case, she says that” I feel it is crucial to find out about their interests and backgrounds and to build the syllabus around the information, so they will be engaged” (2000: 105).
Students' Cultural background

Students' cultural background is the third challenge that some teachers are struggling with. Based on this finding, we understand that these teachers perceive the phenomenon of cultural differences as a serious challenge influencing the efficiency and effectiveness of course design. They based their justification on the rationale that it affected the basic aspects in the development of a course, particularly methodology, content of a course, and methods of assessment.

Generally, within the area of English language teaching, and especially after the spread of English as the global language, culture has become very important in EFL teaching. Atkinson (1999: 625) points to the role of culture arguing that “Except for language, learning, and teaching, there is perhaps no important role in the field of TESOL than culture. Implicitly or explicitly, ESL teachers face it in everything they do”. This implicates that teachers need to be aware of the concept of culture and the relevant aspects including the cultural difference between teachers and students (Atkinson, 1999, Duff and Uchida, 1997)

In spite of being confronted with this challenge, the teachers attempt to be culturally aware of their students' needs in order to handle the issue of cultural difference and to bridge the gap between themselves and their students. This came through developing cultural awareness by understanding and identifying students culturally. Furthermore, they developed particular strategies such as the adjustment or adaptation of curriculum in accordance with students’ needs, in general and students’ culture in particular. For example, participant (W) decided to choose the topics that are suitable to students’ culture.
Challenge Two: Departmental policy

The second category of challenges was attributed to the department’s policy. In spite of the inconsistencies among their views, the teachers identified a number of factors that impact course design such as the selection of textbooks, conflict between the departmental goals and students’ needs, absence of curriculum committees, class size, and lack of teachers’ meetings and reflection.

In light of this finding, we can build up an argument of two parts around the issue of the extent to which teachers must have a role or autonomy in course design. The first part of the argument concerns teachers’ criticism of the department’s policy of imposing textbooks as part of materials development. This reveals teachers’ dissatisfaction with the departmental role in making decisions for shaping or guiding course design. In other words, teachers believe that they must have a role or autonomy in shaping and planning their courses. However, the second part of the argument reveals teachers’ dissatisfaction with having been given the complete autonomy in course design. This is evident when they said that they need external support at the departmental level such as establishing a professional curriculum committee. This indicates that there are certain issues and factors affecting course design that are beyond their control such as the ones mentioned above. In this sense, teachers’ perspectives in this context are not highly compatible with Graves’s premise of teachers as course developers (Graves, 2000). It seems that the total reliance on teachers in designing their context is inadequate. Teachers need support and guidance at the departmental and institutional level in order to design efficient courses (this issue is discussed in detail in section 6.3 concerned with teachers’ suggestions as both deal with the same subject).
6.2.2 Challenges Faced by students

Generally, the students showed their negative criticism towards the courses designed by their teachers indicating that they have destructive impacts on their English language learning. Overall, the students ascribed their challenges to three sources: aspects of course design, classroom methodology, and their language proficiency level.

The results of students’ challenges raise several crucial issues that are essential not only at the level of course design, but at the level of the whole process of course development (see Figure 1.1). One issue is concerned with students’ expectations regarding the learning process. Based on student data analysis we understand that the students in this context have a common expectation or goal that is using English communicatively and fluently. Accordingly, they prefer to have courses that are shaped and characterized by the principles and methods of communicative teaching.

At the course level, they were disappointed to have courses that are designed from their perspectives in a traditional way. For example, they found courses that didn’t include authentic texts, video materials, and topics that enable them to use English communicatively. They considered such courses as a challenge depriving them from the opportunity of practicing English communicatively. Students’ focus on the selection of materials and topics indicates their awareness of the importance of such considerable components in course design that most specialists in curriculum design (like Richards, 2007; 2006; Dudley-Evans and St John, 2004; Tomlinson, 2003, Ur, 2006; Grellet, 1981; Crandall, 1995; Candlin, 1981) agree on. It also indicates their awareness of the advantages of authentic materials such as creating motivation, improving language skills, and saving information.

The second issue is relating to students’ focus on methodology—the stage of implementing a course rather than the stage of designing a course. Again this issue is relevant to the previous issue—their goal or expectation. In this respect, the students raised a crucial issue that was highly stressed by
Graves (2000) regarding the interrelated relationship between course design and classroom methodology. Students’ focus on the role of methodology leads us to understand that the success or power of course design is determined by the success of classroom methodology.

Students’ criticism of the adoption of the traditional method of teaching deprived them from the chance of classroom participation and communication since the dependence was on memorization. This problem has negatively influenced not only their learning, but also classroom atmosphere. The adoption of the traditional method caused boring classroom and students’ demotization. This view indicates the students’ awareness of the advantage of communicative approach in language teaching. Students’ views support the ELT literature focusing on the role of the communicative approach in preparing students for active learning-through interactive, communicative tasks (Richards, 2006; Richards and Rogers, 2001; Liu, 2005; Nunan, 1991). In addition, students’ focus on the importance of teachers’ style in teaching also indicates that the students need motivation at the extrinsic level that is motivation provided by the teacher (Dornyei, 2007; Cheng and Dornyei, 2007; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Oxford and Shearin, 1994).

Overall, examining students’ identification and organization of the challenges and problems affecting their learning are not directly relating to course design, except those that are relating to materials design and selection of topics. Their big challenge is in implementing or delivering the course inside the classroom.

6.2.3 Differences between Teachers and Students’ Challenges

Having a close look at the challenges faced by teachers and those faced by students we can notice the existence of differences between their beliefs and perspectives. While teachers considered students as a big challenge, students considered teachers as a big challenge. Thus teachers speak of the
challenges posed by learners and learners speak of the challenges posed by teachers; suggesting each group looks beyond themselves to locate the problem. Generally, the differences can be ascribed to their concerns and focus. The teachers are highly concerned with the stage of designing courses. They are overwhelmed with selecting attractive materials and topics that are supposed to contribute to building up efficient courses. In contrast, the students’ focus is mainly on the stage of implementing the course that is on methodology and style of teaching. It has been noticed that students call for a different style of teaching such as communicative teaching. While several teachers in this study believe that the approaches they adopt focused on engagement and participation. In addition, the data of this study have shown many instances of differences between teachers and students regarding the conceptualization of course design, challenges, and even the suggestions they provided.

The literature and research on ELT consider the discrepancy between teachers and students’ beliefs as a harmful challenge for the language teaching and learning (Gabillon, 2012). For example, Peacock (2001) believes that the discrepancy between teaching and learning styles creates failure in student learning and demotivation. Nunan (1995) states that the differences between the teaching style preferred by the teacher and the learning style preferred by students may be the source of difficulty. What this data shows however, is that these teachers believe they are addressing the needs and preferences of the students they teach. The precise nature of student need, however, is difficult to define and identify and moving from an idealized intention to realized practice may be much more difficult to achieve; given the complexity of ‘student need’ as a concept.

Richards (2007) points to the issue of differences between teachers and students’ views saying that teachers and students’ views cannot be always identical in a learning situation. Similarly, Bindley (1989) states that the differences between teachers and students’ views are always expected.
However, it is essential that both teachers as well as students must be involved in the process of teaching and learning and designing courses.

In summary, this section highlights the issue of differences between teachers and students’ views that can be considered as the source of challenges for both teachers and students, in addition to other challenges. In this context, the differences between teachers and students’ views resulted in a dissonance between teachers and students regarding particular aspects in course design and the implementation of a course. However, from a research point of view, it is considered as an essential issue that could contribute to our understanding and exploration of this investigated phenomenon.

6.3 Teachers’ Suggestions for the Improvement of EAP Courses

Teachers provided a range of suggestions reflecting their perspectives regarding the process of course design with the aim of completing the picture of understanding how teachers in this study conceptualize the process of EAP course design. The students, on the other hand offered a variety of suggestions for improving course design reflecting a variety of views focusing on the second phase of course development-implementation of a course. Discussion and interpretations of this finding have been stated in the section concerned with students’ challenges in this chapter. For the purpose of avoiding repetition, the reader is advised to see section (6.2.2) as both findings (challenges and suggestions) focus on the same issues. The discussion that follows involves two parts. The first part provides interpretations and conclusions mainly concerned with teachers’ data, and the second part provides a comparison between teachers and students’ suggestions.

The results of teacher data demonstrated a range of suggestions that can be divided into two sets. One set involves suggestions at the
department/institution level, while the other set involves suggestions at the teacher level.

**Category One: Teachers’ Suggestions at the Institution/Department Level**

With regard to the first category, teachers suggested that they need guidance and support by the institution and department. Specifically, they suggested forming a committee that is specialized in curriculum design. This finding raises two crucial issues. One issue is concerned with the belief about teacher involvement in curriculum design, and the other one is concerned with teachers’ desire in forming a community of practices.

With reference to the first issue, the results indicate that the teachers in this context are not very satisfied or interested in the idea of taking sole responsibility for the process of course design. On the contrary, they called for external support at the faculty and department level. They believe that course design is a sophisticated process that involves, in addition to the articulation of the basic elements, the consideration of certain factors that are out of their control. The belief within this suggestion doesn’t support to a large extent the belief held by Graves (2000) and other scholars (like Elliot, 1994; Markee, 1997; Liberman, 1997) who emphasize teachers’ involvement in curriculum design. However, the literature shows another argument proposed by several scholars (like Barth, Fullan, Giroux, Ornstein and Hunkins, Young, 1979 in Handler, 2010:34) who call for the limitation of teachers’ leadership or engagement in curriculum design. Those scholars based their views on the assumption that curriculum engagement or leadership requires a general understanding of a variety of psychological, cognitive, socio-cultural and communicative factors. Furthermore, teachers must be familiar with theoretical knowledge about curriculum design in order to successfully fulfill its requirements.
In light of these two arguments, we can interpret that teachers’ perspective mediates between both arguments. Interpretively, the teachers in this context are not against the idea of their involvement, but with the idea of their involvement within limits. Overall, teachers’ suggestion of being guided and oriented by a professional curriculum committee supports Brown's idea about “Orienting and involving teachers in the curriculum” (1995: 179). Brown points out the importance of involving teachers in the curriculum. However, he argues that if teachers are required to contribute to the language curriculum successfully, they need special orientation and guidance. The orientation he refers to is represented by specific type of information to be conveyed to teachers through orientation meetings by administrators and curriculum planners.

The second issue raised by teachers’ suggestions concerns the idea of working collaboratively as a team work. According to their perspectives, collaborative working can be employed as a strategy for improving issues relating to course design. In this sense, the teachers’ views support the concept of what is called the “community of practice”. The concept of the community of practice was developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) as “the basis of a social theory of learning” (Eckert, 2006: 1). The term community of practice is viewed by Wenger et.al. (2002: 4) as “Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic; and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis”. The importance of this concept lies in providing social knowledge within a professional environment for people who are sharing the same goals and concerns.

Communities may evolve naturally from a group of people who are concerned with an important topic and are faced with different challenges (McDonald, 2006). In the context of the current study the teachers are concerned with a particular issue that is designing effective EAP courses for effective classroom teaching. However, the teachers are struggling with certain
challenges and problems when designing their courses. Accordingly, establishing a community of practice is fundamental for them “to learn together, build relationships, and in the process develop a sense of belonging and mutual commitment” (Wenger et.al. 2002: 34).

Category Two: Teachers’ Suggestions at the Individual Level

This category involves suggestions to be considered at the teacher level with two major themes: course adaptation and professional development. With regard to the idea of course adaptation, the teachers view it as a strategy of making decisions such as flexibility, suitability, usefulness, and modification with the intention of producing courses matching students’ needs and preferences. This finding reflects teachers’ openness or willingness in existing adaptation or adjustment in course design at different stages of course design, particularly at the level of topics, materials, and methodology. The issue of making decisions, particularly the one of adaptability when designing a language course is supported by Graves (2000: 203) when she states that:

> Your beliefs and understandings play a key role because they can help you make decisions about what is core and what is not, according to what you deem important with respect to what the students are learning and how you want them to learn. These beliefs and understandings can also help you make decisions about what to add and what to change.

The notion of adaptation in course design has been mentioned in the literature review of this study, particularly in relation to materials design (sec. 3.3.5). In order to design suitable materials, a teacher must not follow exactly a textbook. Rather, he or she must be free in his or her choice and rejection of the items and topics (Madsen and Brown, 1978). Furthermore, a teacher must be able to analyze critically and modify the content of a course in a way that suits the learning style of students and the demands of the learning situation. This is applicable to the current context. The method of document analysis that was concerned with analyzing “the Course Plan” (section 5.2)
prepared by teachers prior to starting a course, have shown that the teachers don’t stick to the same topics, items, and materials stated in the plan. Rather, they make certain modifications, particularly in relation to articulation of the content and the selection of the material.

Among the suggestions for improving course design at the individual level is enhancing teachers’ professional development. However, only two teachers referred to this idea. They suggested that teachers must attend continuously seminars and workshops in order to improve their knowledge about course design.

With these findings I have approached the purpose of this study by building up a picture involving a variety of teachers’ perspectives regarding the process of designing EAP courses. Specifically, the teachers’ perceptions portrayed three basic issues in course design: the way of articulating course design, factors affecting course design, and suggestions for improving course design. Based on the syntheses of teachers’ views gained from data analysis, I have sketched an analytical framework of course design. In addition the framework draws on a theoretical stance including views and perceptions of scholars specialized with curriculum design. Figure 6.1 below illustrates this framework.
Overall, contrasting teachers and students’ suggestions leads to the following conclusions. First, teachers and students don’t agree to a large extent with their perceptions regarding the improvement of course design. It has been previously mentioned in the section concerned with the differences between teachers and students’ challenges (6.2.3) that most of teachers’ focus was on the first phase of course development -course design. That was reflected in
all categories of their suggestions, at the institutional level as well as at the teacher level. Students’ suggestions however focused on the second phase of course development-course implementation. This leads us to conclude that if a teacher attempts to design an EAP course effectively, he or she has to compromise between the two phases, designing a course and implementing a course. Accordingly, teachers need to know about what and how their students want to learn (Nunan, 1995). Focusing not only on ‘what’ but on ‘how’ a course might be delivered might address both student concerns and provide new insights for teachers in relation to the nature of student needs themselves.

Furthermore, this finding leads us to build an argument that the ease with which teachers in this setting and to some extent the literature advocates awareness of students’ needs with less attention given to the problematic nature of putting this into practice. Accordingly, the teachers in this case study need more awareness and reflections in order to satisfy their students and the demands of EAP learning (Richards, 2007; Farrell, 2008; Moon, 2004; Richards and Lockhart, 1994).
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The current chapter draws conclusions from the discussion of the major findings in chapter six. It is organized into three sections. The first section addresses several implications based on literature and findings of the study. The second section is concerned with providing a set of recommendations that might be of value for the curriculum of the context of the study and might be generalized for other contexts of TESOL. The third section presents some recommendations for future research. Then, the chapter ends with a brief reflection on my research journey.

7.1 Implications

The key themes that emerged from the data analysis provide certain practical implications that can be beneficial for the institution where this study takes place and for teachers who are concerned with designing their EAP/EFL courses.

The section is organized into three sub-sections. Section 7.1.1 involves the implications concerned with teachers’ perceptions regarding course design. Section 7.1.2 involves implications based on teachers and students’ challenges. With regard to the findings concerned with teachers and students’ suggestions, the implications will be provided in the section concerned with the recommendations (7.2) for the purpose of avoiding repetition.
7.1.1 Teachers’ Conceptualization of Course Design: Implications

Having analyzed the data qualitatively to explore how teachers perceive course design, several findings emerged. Some of these findings have implications that are directly related to the mechanism and manner of designing EAP courses, while other findings have implications concerned with certain issues that must be considered in designing courses. The issues are relating to the involvement of teachers in the process of course design and the notion of teacher beliefs. Therefore, the section will be organized into two categories based on these sets of implications.

7.1.1.1 Category One: Implications for Course Design

This section will offer several implications that are directly relevant to the mechanism and manner of articulating EAP courses.

Course design is a Matter of Prioritizing Learning Elements

Within the context of this study, teachers believe that course design is not a standard or static process, in the sense that there is no standard model that teachers have to follow in designing courses. This is because course design is “a grounded process” (Graves, 2000:13) that mainly depends on the type of the context where it takes place. Accordingly, the manner of articulating a course and how it starts is different from context to a context. Similarly, teachers believe that their professional context is unique in terms of students’ needs, socio-cultural issues, and institutional policy. This requires a particular way in designing and starting their courses.

The current finding raises two crucial issues for course design, the starting point and the manner of sequencing the learning elements of a course. It seems that teachers in this context are highly concerned about the starting
point of the course on the basis that it helps in building up the whole process of course design. The majority of them believe that addressing students’ needs must be the first stage in course design. Reviewing the literature on course design, we can find out that there is similarity between teachers’ belief and theoretical frameworks of curriculum or course design that begin with determining students’ needs such as the ones designed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Jordan (1997), and Yalden (1987).

Graves argues that at the course level, this “logical sequence is often impractical or unproductive and has the effect of making teachers feel that they are doing something wrong if they don’t follow it” (2000: 5). In other words, Graves and other specialists of course design (like Nation and Macalister, 2010; Hutchinson and Water, 1987) focus on considering course design as a dynamic process. Therefore, they suggest taking into consideration the "systems view of course design" (Nation and Macalister, 2010) where working on one process such as formulating goals and objectives, will automatically lead to working on materials assessment development.

**Designing EAP Courses Based on Students’ Needs**

The data uncovered an important finding that is designing courses based on students’ needs. Teachers in this context believe that designing a particular course must start initially with addressing students’ needs. Their belief is based on the assumption that addressing students’ needs helps produce courses that are more efficient, focused and responsive. This finding has several implications. First of all, teachers who are concerned about designing their courses must be aware that students’ needs is elemental to designing EAP/EFL courses. This issue has been raised previously in the literature on EAP curriculum or course design. Specialists in EAP curriculum development (like Richards, 2007; Dudley Evans and St. John, 2004, Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Jordan, 1997; Flowerdew and Peacook, 2001) believe that
designing EAP courses is shaped and guided by the analysis or assessment of students’ needs. Given this, they recommend teachers and institutions to consider students’ needs in relation to the unique characteristics of the context.

The second implication for prioritizing students’ needs concerns the involvement of students into the process of course design. Yalden (1987: 98) stresses the importance of students’ involvement stating that “The learner…should be consulted and involved in the design process…once they have understood what is being requested and why, both children and adults can happily and easily make the kind of contribution one would hope for”. Experts in language curriculum design (like Graves, 2000; Richards, 2007; Yalden, 1987; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987) focus on involving students into the process of course design. Students’ involvement means taking into account their needs, preferences, and expectations at all pedagogical, cultural, and psychological dimensions when designing a course (Islami, 2010; Kayl, 2008; Kaur, 2007; Nunan, 1990; Brindley, 1989). This procedure in turn helps teachers articulate the elements of a particular course in a way that creates classroom motivation and interaction.

In practice, teachers in the current context were engaged in addressing students’ needs individually depending on their contextual reflections and beliefs. The process of addressing students’ needs involved analyzing their students’ needs and taking particular decisions. Analyzing students’ needs involved three aspects: their culture, English language proficiency, and their preferences- what they like and dislike in the classroom. The second part of addressing students’ needs involved teachers’ taking decisions such as adaptation, suitability, flexibility, and alignment. This finding raises a third implication relating to the idea of contextualizing EAP courses. Taking decisions such as those mentioned previously indicate that teachers in this context aim at contextualizing the process of designing EAP courses to go in alignment with their students and institutions’ concerns. Each institution has
its own “particularities and requirements” (Zohrabi, 2010: 167), and as such the EAP courses cannot be designed in the same way in all educational institutions (Richards, 2007; Flowerdew, and Peacock, 2001).

The discussion and implications above have mainly stressed the value of considering students' needs and involvement in the course design process. However, the findings of this study raise certain crucial issues that teachers have to be aware of. One of the issues is relevant to the confusion between learning needs and learners' needs. This issue has been previously raised by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) whose focus is on the learning centered approach more than on the learner centered approach. Dudley-Evans and ST. John (2004) raise a similar issue when they suggest that “we must distinguish between overall needs and course needs”. There must be a strong focus on this question: “What is wanted from the course? Richterich (in fatihi, 2003) refers to another relevant issue that is the distinction between ‘objective’ and ‘subjective needs’. Objective needs constitute the initial phase of needs analysis. They are relevant to students' learning, i.e. what students need from the course. Subjective needs, on the other hand, come at a later stage and they are related to the learners’ needs (rather than learning needs).

In light of those issues, the reasonable implication is that teachers must mediate between students’ needs (objective as well as subjective), and learning needs. Ideally, this leads to producing courses that meet all kinds of students’ needs.

Articulation of the Basic Elements of Course Design

Teachers conceptualize course design as a process that is made up of some basic components such as materials design, selection of topics, and goals and objectives development. Overall, they believe that each of these components must be shaped in accordance with the context and students’ needs. This requires making decisions when they design or articulate any of the basic elements such as adaptability, suitability, flexibility, and alignment.
those decisions were discussed in detail in sections 5.1.1.2 and 6.1.1-Theme three in chapters five and six, respectively).

Our concern from this finding is the question “what is the implication(s) from those decisions? The first implication is that making decisions helps teachers to produce courses that are relevant to students’ needs and desires. Realistically, every classroom setting is distinguished by its students who have different socio-cultural background, English proficiency levels, and interests and preferences. Reviewing the literature on curriculum design we have found out that the idea of adaptation has been widely reflected on, but only at the level of materials design. For example, Graves (2000) suggests that the goal of every teacher is to create a pleasant environment that provides opportunities of interaction for students and this comes through adapting a textbook.

The second implication of the finding of teachers making decisions is relevant to the first one, but it implies a further indication that the process of course design is not fixed or static. Therefore, any changes or modifications when articulating any element are possible as long as they contribute to satisfying students’ needs. This belief supports Graves’s belief that “Designing a language is a work in progress”. Her belief is based on the argument that since teaching, which course design is part of, deals with human beings, it must be dynamic. Therefore, any activity, “associated with teaching is in some respect a work in progress will be transformed by those involved in it” (Graves, 2000: 7). Course design is part of teaching and as such changes are expected in articulating any element. Graves refers to an example stated in J.D. Brown’s book (1995) about changing the objectives of a course because of the proficiency level of students that changed over time.

Overall, it is suggested that course design must be viewed as a dynamic process that is guided shaped by the learning situation, in addition to teachers’ beliefs. This in turn, confirms the importance of teacher role
represented by making decisions when shaping any basic aspect in course design.

7.1.1.2 Category Two: Issues Relating to Course Design

The findings of the study have shown that there are two crucial issues that must be taken into consideration when designing a course: teacher involvement and teacher beliefs. In what follows is an outline of the implications of those issues.

Implications for Teachers’ Involvement in the Process of EAP Course Design

We will not meet the needs for better higher education until professors become designers of learning experiences and not teachers.
(Larry in Fink, 2013:1).

Theoretically speaking, ‘teachers’ centrality’ in the development of curriculum has been highly emphasized (Bernstei, Elliot, Liberman, Markee, Rea-Dicknes and Germain in Troudi and Alwan, 2010).

In terms of advantages, teachers’ involvement in the process of course design helps them produce effective and practical courses for students. Basically, this is due to their familiarity with the context of work (Graves, 2000, Richards, 2007, Farrell, 2008). The context is considered as a key factor in determining many crucial issues and decisions relating to course design (Graves, 2000; Dubin and Olishtain, 1987; Yalden, 1987). For example, working in a particular context helps a teacher to know a great deal of information about the level of students, the period of the course, the policy of the institution, and challenges of the context. This suggests that being familiar with the context also helps a teacher to problematize the situation
(Freire, in Graves, 2000; Grundy, 1987) (further discussion of problematizing the situation is provided in section 7.1.3 under the category of teacher’ challenges).

In the context of this study, the teachers are given the privilege of designing the courses they teach. This implies that the teachers are given enough flexibility and freedom in designing their courses. Evidently, their familiarity with their context has enabled them to design courses based on their contextual beliefs and students’ needs. Being familiar with their context has also enabled them to problematize the situation by identifying the challenges and problems that negatively impact the process of course design. Furthermore, it helped them to understand and analyze their students linguistically, culturally, and also pragmatically, that in the light of which they make options and decisions when designing courses.

The proceeding part of this section has offered some theoretical and empirical implications for teachers’ involvement in course design and its advantages. However, analyzing students’ data has raised a crucial issue about teachers’ involvement in course design. The majority of students seemed to be dissatisfied with particular aspects of course design such as materials design and topics selection. The majority of students criticized the selection of topics for their redundancy and unsuitability to their college level. Students also were dissatisfied with the selection of materials arguing that they are restricted on using the textbooks and PowerPoint materials. Thus, lack of providing a variety in materials has influenced negatively their motivation in classroom (for further discussion on this aspect see section 5.2.1).

Teachers’ role and efforts in designing courses in the context of study must not be underestimated as they worked hard to produce courses that are contextually designed with the aim of satisfying students’ needs, demands of the context, and policy of institution. Nevertheless, the process of course
design as has been portrayed by the literature on course design and teachers themselves is highly complex and challenging. The complexity is evident in the articulation of every component.

Theoretically speaking language is a complex phenomenon and recently language education has been influenced by new trends and styles of teaching. Methods of presenting language to students in classroom must be based on a previous plan for articulating every component in an efficient way (Wetten, 2007; Graves, 2000). For example, the process of developing objectives is not merely a matter of selecting an action verb from Bloom’s et.al., Taxonomy to stand for each learning objective. Graves (2000) has recommended the dependence on language models that have been designed especially for this purpose such as KASA (Knowledge, Awareness, Skills, and Attitude) and the one by Stern that focuses on four categories concerned with language learning (Proficiency, Cognitive, Affective, and Transfer).

Another example relates to an essential component that is “conceptualizing content” (Graves, 2000:37). Within the area of ESP/EAP, conceptualizing content is not simply a straightforward matter of selecting and sequencing units and items of a textbook. Rather, conceptualizing content is a demanding task that requires from a course designer and teacher to make decisions about “what to involve, focus, or drop” (Graves, ibid). What makes it more complicated is that conceptualizing content is associated with the methodology-how to teach (Richards, 2007; Brown, 1995; Nunan, 1988 Yalden, 1987; Dubin and Olshtain, 1987).

Another crucial issue relating to teachers’ involvement might be due to the risk of taking options and decisions that are based on their personal intuitions when designing and solving the problems of a course. The data has shown two examples of this case. While some teachers appeared to be highly responsive to their students’ preferences other teachers appeared to ignore what their students prefer inside the classroom. In relation to this finding, two implications can be derived. First, teachers’ decisions should be guided by
In conclusion, course design is a complex, challenging, and demanding process determined by several principles and factors. Contextually speaking, teachers must have a role in designing or redesigning their courses. However, they must be theoretically component and knowledgeable in order to mediate between theory and practice. In addition, their beliefs need to be guided and shaped by supervision at the department level.

**The Role of Teachers’ Beliefs in Designing EAP Courses**

This study has provided a useful insight about the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and course design in this particular context. In this case study, teachers have developed their beliefs from their teaching experiences and familiarity with the context. This implies that both experience and context helped teachers in developing and shaping teachers’ beliefs, which in turn, contributed in designing EAP courses. This finding supports Kolb and Kolb’s (1984) belief that experience has a considerable role in human learning and development.

By means of their contextual experience, teachers not only could seek to understand their students’ needs, culture, and expectations, but also could analyze critically the situation. They could understand that their professional context requires designing courses based on addressing students’ needs. They could also identify the challenges that affect negatively the process of course design and accordingly they took certain decisions.

From pedagogical perspectives, the concept of beliefs is highly significant in education, and particularly in language teaching (Borg, 2003; 2006; Graves, 2000; Clark and Peterson, 1986; Farrell and Lim, 2005; Richards, 2007; Pajaras, 1992). This is because beliefs are rooted in several concepts that
are central to learning such as teachers’ prior and present experience, values, assumptions, knowledge, reflections, and context. By means of beliefs teachers can make sense of and reflect on the learning situation.

The implication that seems reasonable from the outlined finding above is that as far as course design is concerned, teachers should become aware of how their own belief system impact decisions in course design to enable them to become more critical of their own practice. Beliefs can be adopted as an epistemological strategy for planning, articulating, and implementing courses in an effective way.

### 7.1.2 Challenges Faced by Teachers and Students when Designing EAP Courses

#### Challenges Faced by Teachers when Designing EAP Courses: Implications

The teacher data explored a range of challenges that teachers face when designing EAP/EFL courses and how these challenges negatively impact the process of course development. The teachers identified and critically analyzed several challenges that can be categorized in terms of their sources into two sets: ‘Student Factor’ and ‘Institution Factor’, each with several implications.

First of all, identification and diagnosis of factors implies that course design as portrayed by Nation and Macalister (2010) is a process composed of an inner circle including learning elements that are surrounded by an outer circle including a range of influential factors. This suggests that teachers who are engaged in course design must be aware of the surrounding factors and how they affect the process. Also, taking into account all influential factors helps teachers save troubles and manage the situation (Graves, 2000; 1996). However, identification or description of the factors is not effective unless it is integrated with the process of probematization of the situation. Basically,
problematizing the situation involves diagnosing and managing problems. With regard to course design, problematizing the situation requires making decisions such as adaptation of materials, flexibility in syllabus design, modification of activities, and the like as teachers act in this case study.

By means of problematizing the situation, the teachers could further analyze the problems and how to cope with them. For example, in relation to the ‘Student Factor’, the teachers realized that it involves three types of problems: students’ English low proficiency, their preferences, and local culture. Based on the identification of these problems, we can provide further implications that will be outlined in the discussion that follows.

In relation to students’ low proficiency of English; we noticed that it is a serious challenge for teachers that must be treated properly. The context where the study takes place belongs to the sector of Higher Education. This implies that students need to be trained and educated effectively in order to meet the recent requirements of globalization and modern technology, that many countries have been influenced by and Oman is one of them.

The second challenge that confronted teachers under the category of Student Factor is their preferences or their style of learning such as their focus on memorization and their concern about getting high marks rather than being concerned with enhancing their academic growth. This implies that teachers need to be aware of the objective and subjective needs of students as Graves refers which is crucial for teachers when designing their courses. Taking all information about students into account helps teachers to build up their courses in a way that engages students in the process of learning (Graves, 2000).

The third challenge is the students’ local culture that from teachers’ perspectives impacted the efficiency of course design. With regard to the efficiency of course design, teachers, administrators, and curriculum planners...
need to be aware that culture is an integral part in English language teaching (Brown, Peterson and Coltrane, Kramsch, Liddicoat et al., in Kiet Ho, 2009). This implies designing EAP/EFL courses in a way that improves students’ cultural competence which in turn enables students to meet the goal of using English effectively and fluently. Teachers can solve the problem by several strategies to be adopted at the methodological level and the selection of teaching materials and topics. In this respect, Peterson and Coltrance (in Al-Issa, 2005: 159) suggest that “culture must be fully incorporated as a vital component of language learning” since “students can be successful in speaking a second language only if cultural issues are an inherent part of the curriculum”.

Regarding the challenge of cultural differences between teachers and students, there is another implication that teachers need to develop cultural awareness through understanding the context. “Identifying the context” (Graves, 2000). Understanding the context helps teachers to articulate social knowledge about the learning situation. Understanding the context can also help teachers to adapt or adjust themselves in order to bridge the gap between them and their students and create mutual interaction.

The second set of teachers’ challenges is categorized at the institution or department level. The teachers could also identify a number of factors that affect course design. This finding has certain implications, but they will be discussed in section 7.3 under the category of teachers’ suggestions since both sections deal with the same issues.

**Challenges Faced by Students: Implication**

Students’ data have also explored a range of challenges that students struggle with as a consequence of having courses designed and implemented by their teachers. However, students have shown that their challenges are relating to the process of implementing a course.
In addition, the data have shown a surprising finding: while students have been a challenge for teachers, teachers have been a challenge for students. The implication of this finding entails that teachers need to be aware of the relationship between designing and implementing a course. As course receivers, students are more concerned about methodology that is with the second phase of course development. For this reason, Graves (2000) and other experts in course design (like Yalden, 1987, Brown, 1995) advised teachers to be aware of taking into account what and how to teach along with designing a course.

Another crucial issue is relating to the difference between teachers’ perceptions and reality represented by students’ perceptions. The literature concerned with studying teachers and students’ beliefs describes this issue in terms of discrepancy, mismatch, or gap. “It is often pointed out that when the teachers’ beliefs are not in agreement with the expectations and beliefs of their learners this gap causes discrepancies between teachers’ teaching and students’ learning agendas which inevitably influence students’ learning negatively” (Gabillon, 2012: 94). Feldman (1988: 291) recommends teachers and the faculty to take into consideration the phenomenon of differences between teachers and students’ conceptions concerning effective teaching. He states that “Any…differences in students and faculty views might well contribute to the tensions found in some college classrooms”.

In the light of the implication above, it is also implied that teachers have to be aware of the difficulties their students face. In addition, they must take into consideration that what they believe might not be applicable appropriately on reality-classroom setting. This implies that course design cannot be addressed in separation from the process of course implementation as both are interrelated. Sometimes, teachers articulate the basic element of a particular course appropriately, but in the classroom they might be surprised with students’ qualities and demands. Also, teachers must be aware of their
students’ pedagogical preferences. In this study the students showed their interests in communicative teaching rather than traditional teaching.

Finally, I would like to reflect on my own conclusion using Nunan’s (1995: 155) words saying that “I believe there are substantive steps we can take to narrow the gap between teachers and learners” when they “collaboratively engage in the construction of the learning process”.

7.2 Recommendations

The findings of this case study and my interaction with teachers during my thesis work raise a set of recommendations that are of significant value for the faculty administrators and teachers who are concerned with designing or redesigning their courses in the current context. The recommendations are also helpful for course designers at the tertiary level in the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman and probably other tertiary institutions in the Arabian Gulf region.

Recommendation One: Establishing Professional Development Programs at the Ministry of Higher Education Level

Reviewing the literature and research on course design and engaging with the perceptions of teachers and students that form my sample, I have come to realize that the process is complex. This is due to its link with the process of language teaching and learning that in turn is a complex process. Recently language teaching and learning have been influenced by the recent trends of the world policy and technology that have their own reflections on the process of curriculum development, within which course design is a main part. Consequently, it has become necessary for those who are involved in designing language courses to consider any modifications and innovations to produce courses that are consistent with the recent theories and strategies of language education.
As far as course design is concerned, teachers’ expertise is an important factor. According to Farrell (2006: 770) “experience is the greatest teacher”. However, dependence on teachers’ experience is inadequate, and as has been evidenced in this study that complete dependence on the teachers’ beliefs has led to causing certain gaps and significant barriers to designing effective courses. Thus, a teacher must combine theory, experience, and practice when designing and implementing a course (Collin, 1996). For this reason, there must be programs for improving teachers’ professional development.

I suggest that the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman in collaboration with the tertiary institutions need to establish training programs for EFL teachers at the tertiary level. Such programs play a significant role in updating and expanding teachers’ knowledge of the recent pedagogical theories and methods of teaching English as a second or foreign language. “Unless the teacher is developing, development in schooling will not occur” (Roberts cited in Uztosun and Troudi, 2015:26). Ideally, updating teachers’ professional development is expected to have positive impact on students’ learning. There must be programs that are specifically prepared for the purpose of improving teachers’ knowledge in designing, shaping, or modifying the courses they teach. Such programs can also provide opportunities for teachers of English to meet and exchange their ideas and views regarding all issues relevant to course development.

With regard to course design, the training programs must introduce the latest approaches and methods concerned with articulating EAP courses. For example, teachers need to know further about how to design motivating materials for academic courses; how to develop methods of assessment, how to conceptualize the course content, and the like. In addition, such programs are expected to equip teachers with the recent methods that help them implement their courses in the classroom effectively. This recommendation
draws on the perceptions of the students whose focus was on course implementation or methodology more than on course planning.

**Recommendation Two: Developing a Professional Curriculum Committee at the Faculty Level**

Based on teachers’ suggestion that they need guidance and support at the department and institution level, the faculty is recommended to establish a curriculum committee concerned with several issues. First, at the curriculum level, it is recommended that 1. the members of the local committee must collaborate with experts in English language curriculum to determine what courses to offer to the students that satisfy the goals and expectations of the department and students; 2. there must be a careful statement of goals and learning objectives in order to meet students’ needs and expectations in accordance with the recent trends of education; 3. there must be frequent discussion between teachers and the members of the committee regarding the selection and articulation of the course components; 4. there must be a complete survey about the needs analysis at all levels: culture, language proficiency, cognitive abilities, preferences, psychology, as well as others (Dudley-Evans and ST. John, 2004; Richards, 2007).

Second, the committee should set up a statement of policy of students’ admission. Students who enroll the college must gain a minimum score in ILETS or TOEFL in order to cope with the courses that are designed in English and communicate with teachers who are mostly not Arabs. Furthermore, students must be placed into hierarchical levels according to their proficiency of English such as level one for beginners, level two for average students, and level three for advanced students.

Third, the committee should work in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education or other tertiary institutions in order to provide programs of professional development that are tailored for the specific needs of the context where the study takes place. The purpose of those programs is to
provide teachers with workshops and seminars that are concerned with issues relating to designing EAP/ESP curriculum or courses. For example, teachers need to know issues such as adaptation, integration, and alignment in articulating elements like materials and course content. These programs are also important for establishing “a community of practice” as suggested by Lave and Wenger (1991) in this context. Establishing a community of practice is a helpful idea for teachers sharing the same concerns and goals to meet frequently in order to exchange their views and reflections regarding curriculum design.

The idea of teachers’ orientation and guidance at the faculty and department levels is also supported by Graves and other specialists in education who suggest that “teacher involvement is critical to the success of a curriculum, but teachers cannot alone and by their own create and sustain it. Both research and practice emphasize the importance of TOP-DOWN and BOTTOM UP processes as essential for curriculum development and innovation” (Markee, Stoller, Wu, Rice, in Graves, 2008: 175).

Recommendation Three: Teachers Development through Reflective Practice

At the individual level, it is essential for teachers to foster their professional growth through the strategy of reflective practice that is considered as a key component for teacher development. (Richards and Lockhart, 2007; Brookfield, 1995; Ferrell, 2008, 1998; Osterman and Kottkamp, 1993; Schon, 1983)

Within TESOL, the notion of reflective practice has been viewed as a dominant approach because of the recent developments in language education (Pennington, 1992; Richards, 2007). Teachers of English therefore must be aware of the shift in language education. For example, they must be
aware of the shift in their role from the teacher as technician to the teacher as reflective practitioner (Schon, 1983). Pedagogically, teachers also need to be aware of the new methods and styles of language teaching such as the communicative approach, the learner-centered approach, the task-based approach, and the like. In relation to course design, teachers need to update their information regarding every component in order to cope with the recent developments.

In order to engage in reflective practice, Teachers should learn how to subject their own beliefs of teaching and learning to critical analysis, and take more responsibility for their actions (Korthagen in Farrell, 1998). “A reflective teacher is one who critically examines his practices, comes up with ideas as to how to improve his performance to enhance students’ learning, and puts those ideas into practice” (Akbari: 194). In relation to course design, teachers need to think consciously and reflectively about the materials, for example or the topics they have selected for a particular course. They need to ask why-questions such as why this worked successfully and why this didn’t work.

The literature and research on reflective practice offers several ways, formal and informal for ESL/EFL teachers to promote their professional reflection. Self-awareness is a kind of an informal strategy by means of which reflection can be practiced in a form of inner dialogue and conversation with the self that pushes a teacher towards being more conscious of his knowledge, skills, and classroom practices (Yang, 2009; Farrell, 2008; Moon, 2004; Harvey and Knight, 1996). Reflection can also be practiced formally be means such as dialogue, research, journals, blogs, and others.

To sum up, if professional development programs are not easily provided by the faculty, the teachers must practice reflection in order to approach change and innovation. By means of reflective practice, teachers can enhance the quality of their professional knowledge and performance at all stages of
course development: course design, course implementation, and course evaluation.

7.3 Suggestions for Further Research

Recently, there have been an increasing number of published books concerned with the process of curriculum development within the scope of TESOL. However, research on curriculum design shows few studies being conducted for the purpose of addressing course design. Little is known about teachers’ beliefs and role in course design. This qualitative research is an attempt to fill in this gap in TESOL literature, at least in the Arabian Gulf region. It aims to explore teachers and students’ beliefs and perceptions about the process of designing EAP/ESP courses. Through the adoption of the qualitative approach, the study intends to develop a deeper understanding about the process of designing EAP courses at the tertiary level evaluating the extent to which teachers can be successful in designing the courses they teach.

The focus of this study is on the first stage-course design- as part of the whole process of course development. The other stages of course development such as course implementation and course evaluation were not focused on in this study. The findings of the data revealed that there is a close relationship between designing a course and delivering the course in the classroom. Therefore, a further qualitative research is necessary to investigate the effects of course implementation on course design or vice versa from the perspectives of both teachers and students. It is necessary to know how classroom setting influences the process of course design, and how the latter influences classroom pedagogy. It is also necessary to know which component of course design is highly influenced by the classroom context. Is it materials development, course content, learning objectives, or methods of assessment?
Students’ focus on materials design also raises another recommendation for further research. One of the study implications derived from students’ perspectives is that materials design is an essential element in course design. Specialists in ESP/EAP course design emphasized the component of materials when designing courses. A further research is needed to understand from students the link between materials design and learning EAP/ESP. It is very important to know from students whether authentic materials are more helpful in EFL, ESL, EAP learning or created materials.

One of the major findings of this study is based on teachers’ beliefs that designing courses must be based on students’ needs. Accordingly, I suggest that a future study is needed to examine the effects of learners’ needs on the effectiveness and success of designing EAP courses. The aim behind this study is also to show the link between theory and practice. In other words, it is necessary to know to what extent theory and practice regarding addressing learners’ needs meet or conflict.

In summary, the current research has fulfilled the purpose of exploring teachers and students beliefs’ regarding the process of course design, its articulation, evaluation, challenges, and suggestions for improving it. A number of considerable findings and implications have been obtained from the data analysis. As such, the study contributes to the knowledge of curriculum development within the area of TESOL. Since it is a case study research, the findings cannot be generalizable. However, it is recommended that the limitations of the study can be considered in order to conduct further research concerned with examining every aspect and component of course design from the perspectives of teachers and students in this context and other TESOL contexts.
### 7.4 Reflections on the Research Journey

I end up this chapter with a reflection on my research journey in conducting this study. During this long period of study that lasted for almost four years, I learned from every aspect of the study many lessons and experiences. While some of them have been challenging and frustrating, others have been easygoing and joyful.

The first challenge started from the moment I had to select a reasonable and worthwhile topic for my doctoral thesis. Before deciding to choose course design as the subject matter of my thesis, I was aware that it is not easy. Designing the courses we teach was one of my challenges in this context. Based on my teaching experience, I knew that course design is a complex process assembled of many components, and accordingly I had to review the literature and gather and analyze data about each component. I had to read about materials design, conceptualizing the content, developing goals and objectives, preparing assessment, in addition to other issues relating to the topic such as teachers’ beliefs and context. Each of those components would have been a reasonable topic for my doctoral work. However, I preferred to work on course design as a whole process.

When I came to the stage of the literature review, I was frustrated to find a few books written specifically for course design within the area of TESOL. I noticed that most of the books have been written about the general area of curriculum development. It was too hard to find books that specifically fit the topic and purpose of my study. Therefore, I had to go deep through the literature to read about a variety of aspects that are directly and indirectly relevant to of my topic such as the area of course design, teachers’ beliefs and roles, the concept of context, etc.

The main frustration of study dealt with data collection and data analysis. Data collection was challenging because of the selection of interviews as the major method for this study. It was not feasible to schedule meetings with
teachers due to their busy work. Sometimes some participants scheduled interviews so far and accordingly I had to delay my work. It took a long time from me until I collected my data. After gathering data, I thought that I could gain my data, but when I came to transcribe the data in a form of written texts, I realized that what I gained from some teachers was not relevant and not enough. Then, I had to conduct a second interview to gain sufficient data.

Gathering data was challenging, but analyzing and interpreting data were more challenging. The reason was due to the nature of the interpretive approach underling this study. Interpreting what people mean is not easy especially if they don’t answer the questions directly. However, I must admit that each interview I conducted with my colleagues and students was very enjoyable and fruitful. It was a good opportunity for us to share with each other’s our ideas and experiences. We practiced reflections that we do not often do because of our busy schedule in that context.

Part of my challenges was time management. I am a part time PhD student and a full time teacher in a private college. My job is demanding as I have to prepare a variety of tasks like teaching, supervising, preparing assessment, conducting seminars, attending conferences, in addition to other administrative tasks. Therefore, it was hard to balance between my demanding job and my complex study. I realized that in order to progress successfully in their work, PhD students need to devote five hours every day not only for reading and writing, but also for the purpose of focusing and being in contact with the research work. In my case it was difficult to devote this amount of time. However, I endeavored to compensate the everyday working five hours with working all weekend days and holidays. I have been working intensively during the weekend days and summer vacations.

A fundamental element in my research journey is the relationship with my supervisors. In spite of the disagreement between me as a student and my supervisors about certain aspects, which is not surprising, I had a good and
effective relationship with them. I believe that the disagreement must occur due to the different points of views and experiences of the two parties. We had frequent meetings and open discussions. My supervisors provided me with a great deal of support and guidance. Perhaps the only challenge in this respect is our meetings on the Skype. Sometimes it was inconvenient to meet my supervisors on the Skype due to technical issues and problems of listening and misunderstanding. I think that such challenges would not have occurred if we had face to face meetings.

In summary, conducting a doctoral thesis is not an easy and quick process. During my work I experienced a lot of challenges and frustrations, but I enjoyed my research journey. I feel fortunate as I have done something meaningful and useful for me as a teacher and researcher, my institution, and the area of TESOL. My research journey was a good opportunity to share experiences with my supervisors, colleagues, and students. In addition, I could gain a lot of information based on theory and research from intensive reading on the literature review. I have also learned how to be patient and deal with any challenges. Finally, I consider this doctoral thesis as the first step in my research journey.
REFERENCES


Al-Hinai, N.S. (2011). *Effective College Teaching and Students’ Ratings of Teachers: What Students Think, What Faculty Believe, and How Actual Ratings Show Implications for Policy and Practice in*
Teaching Quality and Control in Ministry of Higher Education in Oman. PhD Dissertation: Durham University.


## A Plan of the Program Courses

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Advanced Diploma Degree – Year Three – Sixth Semester

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## General Student Learning Goals

1. Help students become productive and critical thinking members of the society.

2. Prepare students for the job market in language, literature and translation.

3. Enable students to acquire ideas and information in language, literature and translation, and to use that knowledge as the context for exploring new ideas.

4. Develop understanding cultural and social values, and master linguistic skills to facilitate cross cultural communication.

5. Prepare students to peruse their post graduate studies.

6. Support faculty research and participation in national and international academic and research activities.

## Students’ Learning Goals

### Intended Student Learning Goals for the degree of Bachelor in English Language and Literature

1. Describe characteristics of literature in English from diverse literary historical periods and cultures.

2. Use literary critical perspectives to appreciate and generate original analyses of literature in English.

3. Demonstrate good control of the four basic language skills for acquiring and exchanging information.

4. Possess strong understanding of concepts, current issues, and research methods in Linguistics

5. Translate different types of texts from English into Arabic and vice versa.

6. Apply knowledge of psychological principles and educational theories to professional and practical teaching.

7. Use their solid knowledge of the various linguistic systems to perform efficiently oral and written communicative acts within social contexts.
Appendix 3

A List of Research Questions with Purposes

Q.1 How do teachers at a tertiary institution in Oman design their EAP courses?

- to understand how teachers at this college make sense of course design as a whole process;
- to know which components of course design are mostly focused on by instructors, and why;
- to understand how instructors identify the learning needs of their students;
- to understand how instructors determine the content of a course;
- to understand how instructors select the materials for their courses;
- to understand how instructors formulate the learning objectives and goals of a course;
- to understand how instructors organize or sequence their components;
- to understand how instructors integrate the components of a course.

Q.2 What factors have the most impact on designing courses at the tertiary level from the perspectives of teachers?

- to explore and identify the factors that affect the process of course design from the perspectives of teachers in this context;
- to know how these factors affect the process of course design, positively or negatively;
- to develop meanings described in terms of causal relationships between the process of course design and the influential factors.
- to understand how teachers handle the challenges and difficulties they encounter.
Q.3 How do students perceive the courses designed by their teachers?

• to know how students make sense of a course;
• to know how students evaluate a course;
• to know which aspects of a course students perceive to facilitate their own learning;

Q.4 What challenges do students face in relation to course design?

• to know what challenges and problems students encounter that are attributed to a particular course;
• to know how these challenges affected students’ learning;

Q.5 What are the suggestions by teachers and students for the improvement of course design?

• To gain teachers and students’ suggestions for designing effective EAP courses at the context of study;
• to understand how teachers and students’ perspectives regarding course evaluation and improvement differ;
• To understand teachers and students’ perspectives regarding what aspects of a course worked well/ were less.
## Appendix 4
### Interview Guide- Teacher Sample

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<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Interview questions</th>
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<td>How do teachers at a tertiary institution in Oman design their EAP courses?</td>
<td>• Generally, how do you design the courses you teach?</td>
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<td>• What do you think the basic components of a course are? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do you determine the content of a course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do you select the topics of a course? On what basis?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What kind of materials do you prefer to select for your course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do you formulate the goals of a course? And on what basis?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do you organize your course? How do you start, develop, and end?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors that have the greatest impact on designing EAP courses from the perspectives of teachers?</td>
<td>• Generally, what factors that affect designing your course? How do they affect designing the course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What factors that positively/ negatively affect your course design?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do these factors affect designing your course during the preparatory stage or during implementing the course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do you face any challenges when you design your course? In what way do these challenges affect your course design? Can you give examples?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If there are problems how do you cope with them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are teachers’ suggestions for the improvement of course design?</td>
<td>• Do you have any suggestions for teachers working on TESOL for improving the process of course design?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• From your opinion, what aspects of a course worked well and what aspects worked less?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 5
**Interview Guide- Student Sample**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Q.3 How do students at a tertiary institution conceptualize the courses designed by their teachers? | • Generally, what do you think of this course?  
• Can you describe the course in terms of its components?  
• What do you like/don’t like about this course?  
• Does the course satisfy your needs? If yes/no how?  
• Are the goals and objectives clearly stated by the teacher?  
• Were the materials presented valuable? Why?  
• What do you think of the topics associated with this course?  
• What kind of activities and tasks practiced in the class?  
• Which aspects of a course that help facilitate your learning? |
| Q.4 What challenges do students face in relation to course design?                  | • Have you faced any problems and challenges in this course? If yes what are they?  
• How did these challenges and problems affect your learning?                         |
| Q.5 What are the suggestions by teachers and students for the improvement of course design? | • Do you have any suggestions for teachers working on TESOL for improving the process of course design? |
Appendix 6
A Course Plan

Appendix 6.1: Introduction to Modern Grammar

ENGL302 : INTRODUCTION TO MODERN GRAMMAR

Instructor Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Name</th>
<th>:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructor Address</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Hours</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Year</td>
<td>: 2014-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester</td>
<td>: Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Name</td>
<td>: Department of English</td>
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</table>

Course Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>: Introduction to Modern Grammar</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Code</td>
<td>: ENG 302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisite</td>
<td>: Basic Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credits</td>
<td>: 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching Method</td>
<td>: 3 Hours of Lecture per Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>: Explanations by the Instructor</td>
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<td>Group / Pair Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Conferencing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments and Presentations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Description:

The course provides an intensive investigation into contemporary English sentence structure, function and meaning. It also analyzes how structure types and sentence relationships are realized in various texts and genres. The course concentrates on the main sentential phenomena such as simple sentence, compound sentence and complex sentence with relative and subordinate clauses.

Department Program Objectives:

Our graduates use English grammatical structures to speak and write for communication.
Course Outcomes:

At the end of this course the following outcomes should be achieved:

1. Demonstrating the accurate use of various types of perfect aspects orally and in writing;

2. Distinguishing by form, meaning, and use different types of models and use them in academic and social settings;

3. Identifying and using patterns of passive voice in spoken and written discourse;

4. Analyzing and using appropriately the patterns of gerunds and infinitives in written texts;

5. Understanding and distinguishing the different patterns of conditional sentences.

Course study plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Timing (in weeks)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1  | Introduction  
Present perfect aspect                                         | Sep 7-13          |
| 2  | Past perfect aspect: simple and continuous                                | Sep. 14-20        |
| 3  | Future perfect aspect: simple and continuous                               | Sep. 21-27        |
| 4  | Passive voice, Revision before the test, activities, and presentations     | Sep. 28-Oct. 4    |
| 5  | Test 1                                                                     | Oct. 5-11         |
| 6  | Models of certainty                                                        | Oct. 12-18        |
| 7  | Models of possibility                                                      | Oct. 19-25        |
| 8  | Models of Necessity and prohibition                                         | Oct.26-Nov.1      |
| 9  | Models of ability                                                          | Nov. 2-8          |
| 10 | Would you mind                                                             | Nov.9-15          |
| 11 | Revision before the test, activities, and presentations                     | Nov.16-22         |
| 12 | Test 2                                                                     | Nov.23-29         |
| 13 | Gerund patterns: introduction  
Using gerunds as subjects, objects, and objects of prepositions 
Common verbs followed by gerunds | Nov. 30-Dec.6     |
| 14 | infinitive : introduction                                                  | Dec.7-13          |
Adjectives followed by infinitives
Types and functions of infinitives

15
Conditional sentences: Type 1 and 2
Dec.14-20

Conditional sentences: Type 3 and 4
Revision before the test, activities, and presentations
Dec.21-27

16
Final Exam
Dec.28-Jan.3

Total No of Weeks 16 Weeks

Attendance Policy:

Regular class attendance is expected from all students. Attendance falling below 85% will result such students becoming ineligible to sit for the final examination. Absence from lectures should be informed to the Registrar. Emergency cases of absence due to hospitalization or due to death of an immediate family member should be supported with approved documental evidence, so that it can be considered favorably in such cases towards its absence.

Assessment and grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark Range</th>
<th>Outcome 1</th>
<th>Outcome 2</th>
<th>Outcome 3</th>
<th>Outcome 4</th>
<th>Outcome 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test 1</td>
<td>✓ (30%)</td>
<td>✓ (30%)</td>
<td>✓ (40%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Test 2</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
<td>✓ (10%)</td>
<td>✓ (40%)</td>
<td>✓ (30%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Project/Quiz Presentation Assignment Participation
✓ (20%)   ✓ (20%)   ✓ (20%)   ✓ (20%)   ✓ (20%)

Weighting of SLO/Total Mark

Test1 (20%), Test2 (20%), Final Exam (50%), participation and attendance (10%)

Test 1: Marks: 20 – written test
(Test 2: Marks: 20 - written test

Others: Marks: 10 – for attendance, participation and homework

Final Exam: Marks: 50.

Assessment Criteria:

The final grade in the course will be determined by the following scale of percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark Range</th>
<th>95-100</th>
<th>90-89</th>
<th>85-84</th>
<th>80-79</th>
<th>75-74</th>
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<th>65-64</th>
<th>60-59</th>
<th>55-54</th>
<th>50-49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D+F</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Plagiarism:

“Plagiarism is using someone else’s work, in whole or in part, as one’s own without crediting or citing that source properly. It also occurs if the permission has not been obtained from the author to use his or her work. It includes all electronic sources, all printed and written sources; and all verbal sources. In BUC sharing one’s work with other students is also considered an act of plagiarism. Plagiarism can lead to punishment ranging up to giving grade (f) in the course or dismissal from the college”.

Textbooks, Supplementary Materials

Text Books


# ENGL 155
# ESSAY WRITING AND FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

## Instructor Contact Information

| Instructor Name | : |
| Instructor Address | : |
| Office Hours | : |
| Academic Year | : 2014-2015 |
| Semester | : Semester 2 |
| Department Name | : Department of English |

## Course Information

| Course Title | : Essay Writing and Freshman Composition |
| Course Code | : ENGL155 |
| Prerequisite | : Introduction to Essay Writing |
| Credits | : 3 |
| Teaching Method | : Explanations by the Instructor  
Group / Pair work.  
Class Discussion  
Individualized Conferencing  
Assignments  
Presentations  
Writing Workshops |

## Course Description:

The course aims to consolidate and deepen students' experience in writing. The writing activities vary in type, subject and length with the progression of the course. The course lays heavy emphasis on effective expository and argumentative writing. It approaches writing
as a process, emphasizes redrafting, and enhances students’ awareness of purpose and audience.

**Department Program Goals:**

Our graduates demonstrate good control of the four basic language skills for acquiring and exchanging information.

**Course Learning objectives:**

By the end of the course students will be able to:

1. Brainstorm, free-write, organize an outline, write drafts revise and edit.
2. Correct run on sentences.
3. Use structural devices like transitions and connectors and passives, conditionals and clauses.
4. Write different types of five-paragraph essays with an introductory paragraph consisting of a hook, background information and theses statement, three body paragraphs and a concluding paragraph.

**Course Syllabus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Timing (in Weeks)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Five-paragraph Essay: Elements of an Essay- Developing the Five-paragraph Essay</td>
<td>1 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Unity and Coherence in the Five-paragraph Essay- Run on sentences</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Process Analysis Essays- Organization of Process Analysis Essays</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Process Analysis Essays- Organization of Process Analysis Essays Time Clauses- Passives</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Test1</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Time Clauses- Passives</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Cause and Effect Essays- Organization of Cause and Effect Essays-</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cause connectors and Effect Connectors</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Real and Unreal Conditions</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Argumentative Essay- Argumentative Organization</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Test2</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Counter Argument- Concession and refutation -Addition and Contrast Connectors – That Clause</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Classification of Groups – order of Importance, Degree and Size Classification Essays</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Gerunds – Infinitives</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>2 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total No of Weeks</td>
<td>16 Weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attendance Policy:**

Regular class attendance is expected from all students. Attendance falling below 85% will result such students becoming ineligible to sit for the final examination. Absence from lectures should be informed to the Registrar. Emergency cases of absence due to hospitalization or due to death of an immediate family member should be supported with approved documental evidence, so that it can be considered favorably in such cases towards its absence.
Assessment and grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark Range</th>
<th>Outcome 1</th>
<th>Outcome 2</th>
<th>Outcome 3</th>
<th>Outcome 4</th>
<th>Outcome 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test 1</td>
<td>✓ (30%)</td>
<td>✓ (30%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓ (40%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
<td>✓ (10%)</td>
<td>✓ (40%)</td>
<td>✓ (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project/Quiz Presentation Participation</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
<td>✓ (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weighting of SLO/Total Mark

Test 1 (20%), Test 2 (20%), Final Exam (50%), participation and attendance (10%)

**Test 1:** Marks: 20 – written test

**(Test 2:** Marks: 20 - written test

**Others:** Marks: 10 – for attendance, participation and homework

**Final Exam:** Marks: 50.

**Assessment Criteria:**

The final grade in the course will be determined by the following scale of percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark Range</th>
<th>95-100</th>
<th>90-94</th>
<th>85-89</th>
<th>80-84</th>
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<tr>
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<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plagiarism:

“Plagiarism is using someone else’s work, in whole or in part, as one’s own without crediting or citing that source properly. It also occurs if the permission has not been obtained from the author to use his or her work. It includes all electronic sources, all printed and written sources; and all verbal sources. In BUC sharing one’s work with other students is also considered an act of plagiarism. Plagiarism can lead to punishment ranging up to giving grade (f) in the course or dismissal from the college.

Text Books, Supplementary Materials


Instructor Contact Information

Instructor Name : 
Instructor Address : 

E-mail : 
Office Hours : 

Year : 2014-2015
Semester : Semester 2

Course Information

Course Title : General English
Course Code : ENGL 002
Prerequisite : None
Credits : 3
Teaching Method: 3 Hours of Lecture per Week
Methodology:
    - Explanations by the Instructor.
    - Group / Pair work.
    - Class Discussion.
    - Individualized Conferencing
    - Assignments
    - Presentations
    - Visiting the Library

Course Description:

The course is designed in a way to ensure that learning English is interesting and motivating. The course deals with the grammar component through controlled and free practice exercises to ensure students’ high accuracy. The four language skills are developed systematically through interwoven activities and in exciting new contexts. The vocabulary is developed through many dictionary-based skills which also develop the pronunciation competency. All these are introduced through carefully-selected topics from a variety of sources.
Department Program Objectives:

Our graduates will be able to demonstrate good control of the four basis language skills for acquiring and exchanging information.

Course Objective:

By the end of the course students are expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes:

- Using efficiently the four language skills namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing for communicative purposes.
- Recognizing the phonemic symbols of the English language sounds.
- Looking up word meaning and pronunciation quite easily and efficiently in a monolingual dictionary.
- Becoming more knowledgeable of the world through studying different topics selected from varied resources.
- Using every day English appropriately in informal situations as different from formal English used in formal situations.

Course Study Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Timing (in Weeks)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reading comp: Life’s ups and downs., Vocabulary</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grammar: forming nouns &amp; gerunds, and forming adjectives; writing</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reading Comp: Adventures and mishaps; vocabulary and listening: mishaps</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Verb forms in the narrative, continuous aspect; writing: A narrative</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Test1</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reading comp: The mind, Vocabulary: qualities of the mind, Reading and speaking: gender gaps on the brain</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Grammar: the passive; writing: A formal letter</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Reading comp: Unusual achievement, reading and</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Task Description</td>
<td>Duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Grammar: perfect tenses; task: talk about achievements</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Reading Comp: Getting it right, Reading and vocabulary: worse case scenarios</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Listening and writing, grammar: articles</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Test2</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Reading Comp: Big Events, vocabulary and speaking</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Grammar: relative clauses</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Revising</td>
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<td>16</td>
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Total No of Weeks: **17 Weeks**

---

**Assessment and Grading**

**Assessment Methods**

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test1</td>
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<td>✓(50%)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test2</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓(25%)</td>
<td>✓(75%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>✓(25%)</td>
<td>✓(25%)</td>
<td>✓(25%)</td>
<td>✓(25%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment Weightings:

Test1 (20%), Test2 (20%), Final Exam (50%), Others (10%)

Assessment Criteria:

The final grade in the course will be determined by the following scale of percentages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark Range</th>
<th>95-100</th>
<th>90-94</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade Points</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Textbooks, Supplementary Materials

Text Books:

APPENDIX 6.4: STUDY SKILLS

Instructor Contact Information

Instructor Name : 
Instructor Address : 
Office Hours : 
Academic Year : 2014-2015 
Semester : Semester 2 
Department Name : English

Program Learning Outcomes

Our graduates demonstrate good control of the four Language skills for acquiring and exchanging information.

Course Information

Course Title : Study Skills 
Course Code : 0101004 
Prerequisite : Nil 
Credits : 3

Teaching and Learning Activities:

1. Methodology:
   • Explanations by the Instructor
   • Group / Pair Work
   • Class discussion
   • Individualized conferencing
   • Assignments
   • Presentations
   • Visiting the library
• Surfing the internet
• Word journals

2. Interactive Lectures and Tutorials:
• There are 3 hours of lecture per week.
• Basic knowledge of the course is presented with power point slides.
• Basic concepts and techniques are illustrated with classroom exercises and examples.
• Quizzes/Assignments/Lab sheets are given for its discussion/solution and expect an active participation with queries and answers.

Course Description:

The course helps students to improve their English and gives them skills and practice in using English as a language of instruction. In this case they can improve their study habits in English. The course stresses the fact that once the skill has been introduced, it’s the student’s responsibility to continue practicing it on his/her own until it is mastered efficiently. Therefore, the course deals with topics such as using an English dictionary, learning vocabulary in English, outlining, writing a research paper, giving a presentation, using a library, and preparing for examinations.

Student Learning Outcomes:

On the completion of this course the students should be able to:

1. Recognize the strategies of effective study skills.
2. Demonstrate reading skills and presentation skills.
3. Apply note-taking skills and research methodology.
4. Analyze structural and thematic aspects of written texts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Timing (in weeks)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Classes begin + orientation to courses content &amp; objectives</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Improving reading skills</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reading skills (cont.)</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reading skills (completed) /Parts of Book</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Parts of Book + Introduce vocabulary development &amp; dictionary skills</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vocabulary skills (cont.)</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Finish vocabulary skills + Begin time management Start of first Exam</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Time management (cont.)</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Time management (completed) + begin note-taking</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Note-taking (cont.)</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Note-taking (Completed)+ presentation</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Writing : organizing a research paper + Start of second Exam</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Organizing a written research paper (completed)</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Useful resources of information : the net , encyclopedias , dictionaries , almanacs , etc.</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Useful resources (cont.) + students hand in Vocabulary Journal assignment</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 &amp; 17</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>2 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total No. of Weeks</td>
<td>17 Weeks</td>
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Assignments:
Assignments/projects are designed based on the syllabus of the course and it may consist of exercises directly or indirectly related with the topic taught during the class. Assignments should be submitted to the instructor on or before its due date for submission. Specify necessary identification details such as your Name, ID Number, Section, Course Code, Course Name and Instructor Name on the assignment. Assignments will not be accepted under any circumstances after a major exam has been given for that subject area and a grade zero will be given automatically for that assignment.

Attendance Policy:
Regular class attendance is expected from all students. Attendance falling below 80% will result such students becoming ineligible to sit for the final examination. Absence from lectures should be informed to the Registrar. Emergency cases of absence due to hospitalization or due to death of an immediate family member should be supported with approved documental evidence, so that it can be considered favorably in such cases towards its absence. In such cases absentees will be awarded “Drop” rather than “Fail”.

Assessment and Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark Range</th>
<th>Outcome 1</th>
<th>Outcome 2</th>
<th>Outcome 3</th>
<th>Outcome 4</th>
<th>Total Mark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project/Quiz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighting of</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Test1 (20%), Test2 (20%), Final Exam (50%), participation and attendance (10%)

**Test 1:** Marks: 20 – written test

**Test 2:** Marks: 20 - written test

**Others:** Marks: 10 – for attendance, participation and homework

**Final Exam:** Marks: 50.

**Assessment Criteria:**

The final grade in the course will be determined by the following scale of percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark Range</th>
<th>95-100</th>
<th>90-94</th>
<th>85-89</th>
<th>80-84</th>
<th>75-79</th>
<th>70-74</th>
<th>65-69</th>
<th>60-64</th>
<th>55-59</th>
<th>50-54</th>
<th>0-49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade Point</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Grade | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C+ | C | C- | D+ | D | F |

**Plagiarism Warning**

“Plagiarism is using someone else’s work, in whole or in part, as one’s own without crediting or citing that source properly. It also occurs if the permission has not been obtained from the author to use his or her work. It includes all electronic sources, all printed and written sources; and all verbal sources. In
BUC sharing one’s work with other students is also considered an act of plagiarism. Plagiarism can lead to punishment ranging up to giving grade (f) in the course or dismissal from the college”.

Textbooks, Supplementary Materials


**Recommended Websites and Links**

- [www.smarterstudyskills.com](http://www.smarterstudyskills.com)
- [www.howtostudy.org](http://www.howtostudy.org)
Appendix 7
A Consent Form Letter for Teachers

Dear Colleague

Thank you for participating in this interview and for expressing interest in taking part in my study. My study is under this title: *Investigating the Process of EAP Course Design by Teachers at a Tertiary Level, English Department, a Private College in Oman from the Perspectives of Teachers and Students.* The study aims at understanding and exploring the participants' (teachers and students) experiences regarding the process of designing EAP/EFL courses by teachers at the tertiary level, department of English, within the area of TESOL.

Your participation in this research will contribute to providing a more comprehensive understanding of how EAP/EFL course design at the academic level is addressed by you and how it is affected by the circumstances at the level of our professional context. The results of the proposed study will contribute to improving the aspect of curriculum design at the level of our unique context and at a general level in the field of TESOL. In addition, through your participation in the interview and discussions you might get further experience and new concepts that help you adapt or redesign your courses for the coming semesters.

During the interview, you may choose to discuss some sensitive topics, but there are not any expected risks or harmful side effects from your participation in this research. The interview will be conducted in a prior secure place like my office at the college after work hours and it will be tape recorded.

The information you provide will be treated confidentially by keeping it in a secured file that will only be viewed by the researcher and the supervisor. You name or any individual identity will not be shown, but instead pseudo letters will be used in the sections on data analysis and discussion of
findings. Also, your recording will be kept in a secure location. After the interview, the recorded data will be transcribed in a form of written segments and phrases and will be shown to you. Then, you have the right to review or modify the results prior to data analysis or before submitting the research. For further information, consider the data protection notice (created by Exeter University) shown below:

“Data Protection Notice - The information you provide will be used for research purposes and your personal data will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and the University’s notification lodged at the Information Commissioner’s Office. Your personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties. The results of the research will be published in anonymised form.”

Participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study any time without penalty or loss of anything.

Finally, I hope that you will enjoy the interview through reflecting on our experiences and views associating with the task of designing our courses. If you have any questions at all please don’t hesitate to contact me on my address below. I am excited about the potential results of this research.

Sincerely,
Iman Al Khalidi
English Department
Email: emza20011969@Yahoo.com
Dear student

Thank you for expressing interest in taking part in my study through participation in focus group discussions. The focus group discussion will be employed as a method of collecting data qualitatively for my thesis under the title: *Investigating the Process of EAP Course Design by Teachers at a Tertiary Level, English Department, a Private College in Oman from the Perspectives of Teachers and Students*. The study aims at understanding and exploring the participants' (teachers and students) experiences regarding the process of designing EAP courses by teachers in our department.

I need five groups for focus discussions. Each group involves five to six students who study English as a foreign language at the department of English in our college. The participants in each group are purposefully selected on the basis of their academic levels (diploma and bachelor degrees) and their GPA. The purpose of their participation is to express their experiences and views regarding how they understand and reflect on the courses they study. For this task, I have prepared a set of open ended questions that are designed to answer these two major research questions:

- **How do students perceive the courses designed by their teachers?**

- **What challenges do students face in relation to course design?**

- **What are the suggestions by teachers and students for the improvement of course design?**

Your participation will contribute to collecting rich and in depth data for analysis and accomplishing this research. Furthermore, you participation will contribute to improving the aspect of curriculum design in our faculty and in the whole area of TESOL. As a teacher, I will benefit from any suggestions
relating to evaluating and improving the process of course design for the coming semesters.

This study is confidential. The confidentiality will be maintained by several procedures. First, the recorded interview will be saved in a research file and in a secured location that will only be accessed by the researcher and the supervisor. Second, while data analysis, names of students will not be identified, but instead numbers will be used. Also, if I decide to publish the results of study, no names will be included. Third, after the interview, the recorded data will be transcribed in a form of written segments and phrases and will be shown to the students for the purpose of revision and modification. For further information, consider the data protection notice (created by Exeter University) shown below:

“Data Protection Notice - The information you provide will be used for research purposes and your personal data will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and the University's notification lodged at the Information Commissioner’s Office. Your personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties. The results of the research will be published in anonymised form.”

The interview will be conducted in a secured place in the college-my office after work hours. No one will attend the interview except the researcher and the participants. The interview is expected to last from one hour to two hours with short breaks. Every interview will be recorded by a digital voice recorder or video typed. I will try to provide relaxing atmosphere to motivate students to express their experiences and views freely and openly. There are not any expected risks or harmful side effects from your participation in this research. This is because the discussion will deal with academic topics within the protocol of semi structured interviews.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study any time without penalty or loss of anything.
Finally, I hope that you will enjoy the interview through reflecting on our experiences and views associating with the process of designing our courses. If you have any questions at all please don’t hesitate to contact me on my address below. I am excited about the potential results of this research.

Sincerely,
Iman Al Khalidi
English Department
Email: emza20011969@Yahoo.com
# Appendix 9

How do teachers at a tertiary level design their courses?

## How do Teachers design EFL/EAP courses?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Process of designing EAP Courses</th>
<th>Articulating Course Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prioritizing Course Components</td>
<td>Materials design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participant</td>
<td>Prioritizing student needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>analyzing students' needs in terms of culture and language proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>designing a course based on students' needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Designing courses based on students' needs -- their linguistic level,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>designing courses based on students' needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>designing courses based on students' needs -- their abilities, deficiencies, and preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Designing courses based on Students' needs and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Designing courses based on students' needs-their culture and linguistic level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritizing methodology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>topic selection and methodology-lectures &amp; presentations manner of sequencing topics (moving from the general to the particular)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L</strong></td>
<td>Designing courses based on methodology; Defining methodology in terms of cultural considerations, socializing, instructions, and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>designing language courses in an integrated way</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>designing courses based on integrating language skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 10

Summary of Study Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions of study</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Q. 1 How do Teachers at a tertiary institution in Oman conceptualize and design EAP courses?** | Finding One: Teachers’ conceptualization of course design as a matter of prioritizing the key element;  
Finding Two: Articulation of basic elements based on teachers’ perceptions  
Finding Three: Designing EAP Courses Based on Students’ Needs  
Finding Four: The role of teachers’ beliefs in EAP course design  
Finding Five: Teachers’ involvement in course design |
| **Q.2 What factors have the major impact on designing EAP courses from the perspectives of teachers?** | Finding One: Challenges based on Student Factor  
Finding Two: Challenges based on Institution Factor |
| **Q.3 How do students perceive the process of course design?** | Finding One: Students’ evaluation of course design based on their perceptions  
Finding Two: Students’ evaluation of the basic elements of course design |
<p>| <strong>Q.4 What are the challenges that students face as</strong> | Finding One: Selection of topics |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Finding One: Suggestions at the institution/department level,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.5 What are teachers and students’ suggestions for improving course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>design?</td>
<td>Finding Two: Suggestions at the teacher level,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Suggestions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students’ Suggestions</td>
<td>Finding One: Improvement at the methodological level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>